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OWN YOUR OWN HOME

By RING W. LARDNER
Author of *My Four Weeks in France*, *The Real Dope*, *Treat 'Em Rough*, etc.

Illustrated by
FONTAINE FOX

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CHAPTER I

IT'S THE ONLY LIFE

Chicago, May 3—

Brother Charley. I bet when you here what I & Grace has made up our minds you & Mary will wisht you was doing the same thing or may be you will follow our exampel & do the same thing & I hope you will because its the only way to live when you got childern.

Charley we made up our minds to buy a place some wheres out in the subburbs & build a house not a grate big house of corse but a house where a man can move a round in with out bumping in to the walls all the wile and have enough ground so the childern wont half to be cooped up all the day like in a flat but can run around & get some exxersise.

The other day the Walters come to see us & stayed

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all p m & little Ed & the baby both of them hollered all the wile they was there & when the Walters had went I says to Grace its a bout time you lerned them babys to shut there mouth when we got Co. & Grace says I can't do nothing with them because there cooped up in the flat all day & dont never get out & how can you expect them to be nothing but cross & mean all the wile. She says you are makeing good money now & I dont see why is it we cant find a place out in the country some wheres & live there & it wouldent take you no longer to get to work then it does now with this rotten L servus.

So I says well when our lease runs out in Oct. I will look a round in some of them subburbs & see can we rent a house reasonible or may be we can buy a little 1 on payments. Then Grace says lets buy a lot some wheres & build our own house & I says what do you think I am rockefellow & she says no but you dont half to be rockefellow to build a house now days because you can borry the money & pay it back a little to a time & just like paying rent only your getting more for your money. Then she says and besides I got $500 in the bank that you can take & how much you got in the bank your self. I had got out my bank book & seen where I had a bout $300 & with her $500 that makes a bout $800 & we can get a nice lot some wheres for that amt. & then pay for the house by the mo. & build a bungello say costing $1200 and have it all payed for in 1 yr. by paying $25 per wk. & meen

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time we can live on $25 per wk. & cut down on cloths & nickle shows & groserys.

I am going to get off tomorrow p m and Annies comeing over to look out for the babys while I & Grace gos to 1 of the subburbs & we are going to look them all over 1 to a time before we chose the 1 we want so it may be will be 2 or 3 mos. before I can write & tell you where are we going to locat at. But now I cant hardly wait till we got our lot & started to build our bungello because a man aint realy liveing when he is liveing in a flat & espeshaly when youve got childern. You better get busy Charley & get in to the game.

Kindest to Mary.

Fred A. Gross.

Chicago, May 5—

Brother Charley. I dident think I would be writeing you this news so quick but we got our lot all ready & its out to Allison 16 mi. west of the Loop on the c d & x & it dont only take 40 min. for the trains to come in to town & it takes me 35 min. now to go in on the L. We was going to look over all the subburbs but Allison was the 1st. 1 on the list & Grace got stuck on it right a way & so did I & we went a round with the real estate man & he showed us some swell lots & 1 that you couldent get a way from because it was big & roomy & 3 big trees on it that the real estate man says is maple & a real bargun because its 100 ft. frontidge & 150

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ft. deep & only $1500 & we can pay for it when ever we get ready provideing its in side of 2 yrs. & thats easy.

I had $100 a long with me when we went out & when I seen what a bargun we was gettin & the real estate man says we better hurry if we wanted it because some body else was libel to see it & cop it out so I give the real estate man the $100 to bind the bargun & he is going to get the papers fixed up today & then I will

give him the other $700 we got saved in the bank & then we can borry the money to build the bungello & pay that back a mo. at a time & finnish up paying for the lot after words. We figure that in 2 yrs. we will be all cleaned up & have our own home & not be worring a bout no rent onct a mo. & they'll be room for the kids to play a round all day with out no danger of them being ran over by a st. car or some thing.

I got a date with the real estate man to get the pa-

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pers fixed up & must hurry down town. You better get busy Charley & get in to the game.

Kindest to Mary.

Fred A. Gross.

Chicago, May 7—

Dear Charley. Well Charley I guess I was in to much of a hurry & it dont look now like we would start building this summer but will half to wait till later on. I dident know how they done them things but found out that theys a lot of red tape & you cant do them things in no hurry like I thot. The real estate man dident have no papers fixed up the day before yest. like he promused but had them fixed up yest. & he give me the warranty deed or what ever it is they call it & I give him my note for $700. for the rest of what we owe on the lot & the notes for 2yrs with 6% int. per annum & all so cost me $25. to get what they call a garantee polisy from the title & trust Co. which garantees that the title is o k & they cant no body take the lot a way from me un less I dont pay up the bal. which of corse I will pay up as soon is posable.

Well after this was fixed up I went a round to the bank where I had my saveings at & went to the real estate dept. & seen the man there and asked him did they make building lones & the man says yes. Well I says I want to borry $1200 to build a bungello out to Allison & he says do you own a lot & I says yes & he says let

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me take a look at your papers so I show him my papers & he says yes you own a lot all but paying $700 more on it. I says yes but I own it because there is the deed & the garantee polisy & when I get threw paying you back what you lone me to build the house I will pay off the bal. on the lot & he says o no you wont because we dont do no busness that way & 1st. you got to pay off what you owe on the lot & then may be we can fix it up a bout a building lone but I wont promus

nothing. Well I argude with him but nothing doing & when I come home & told Grace I thot shed cry her eyes out but finely we seen they wasent no use in that so all we can do now is save up & pay off the $700 we still owe on the lot & then we can start building & meen time we can be planing the bungello & we figure that we can save $30 per wk. in sted of $25 if we live pretty clost & can have the lot payed for in less than 6 mos. & that will be in Nov. & we can be all ready to start building & get the foundashun layed before real cold

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weather & then the carpenters can finnish up dureing the winter & we can be in the house next spring & we will half to renew our lease for 6 mos. but we dont care nothing a bout that because it aint so bad liveing in a flat dureing winter when the kids couldent be out much any way.

Kindest rgds. to Mary.

F. A. Gross.

Chicago, Nov. 2—

Brother Charley. Well Charley we got our lot payed for sooner then we figured & its all payed for now because Graces old man come acrost on her berth day & give her $100 & says it was for her to buy cloths with but she says we would stick it right in to the lot & the old man wouldent never know the dffrence & I says all right thats fine. But the man that owned the lot before we got it stuck us up for $20 int. & I dident see how they could be int. when we dident yet have the lot no where near a yr. but the real estate man says it was right & what could I do.

But we aint going to build no bungello after all because Grace lerned from her brothers wife Gus Walters that bungellos was all out of date & no good & they wasent no room in them & if you was going to build a house why not build a good 1. So we been talking to a young archateck & he says we can put up a swell 2 story house for $2000 & he will draw up the

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plans & see that the house is built o k & all we half to give him is 5% of what the house cost or $100 & he will over look the hole busness & hes a good archateck all right because he graduated out of the univ. & got his office way up on pretty near the top flr. of the Jackson bldg. Him and Grace has been figureing out plans for the house all yest. & today & I am going down to the bank as soon as they get there plans all fixed up & the contrack let & fix up a bout the lone & they wont be no trouble a bout it now because I got the rec. in full for the lot & dont owe nothing. The archateck says he will have the plans drawed up in a day or 2 & the contrack let before the end of the wk. & he says it should ought to be easy to get a contrackter cheap now because its the dull season & if the work is huryed a long they can get the foundashun in before real cold weather & the house finnished by the middle of march & our lease is till the 1 of May but may be I can get rid of it the 1 of march by sub leaseing it to some body else.

Well Charley we wont be able to do no high flying for the next couple yrs. because we got to keep on puting a way $30. per wk. & if we can do that we should ought to have the hole thing payed for archateck & all in less then 1yr. & ½ int. incluseive & I figure the hole thing includeing the lot will amt. to a bout $3700 & thats a lot of money but look what wear geting a nice home of our own where decent people lives & a big yd. where we can let the kids run a round & may be

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raise chickens & have a garden. I guess thats better than paying $25 per mo. rent & being cooped up in a 4 room flat eh Charley.

Kindest to Mary.

Fred A. Gross.

Chicago, Nov. 15—

Dear Charley. Charley wear going to have some house. The plans is drawed & the contrack let & there going to begin building tommorrow that is brakeing ground for the foundashun if I can get things fixed up down to the bank this p m. Ive gave the archateck $25 as 1st payment for his work & I dont half to give him the other $75 till 30 days after the house is done next march.

I will tell you a bout the house Charley & you can see how swell wear going to be fixed up. The house is going to have 7 rms. 3 down stares & 4 up stares. Down stares they will be the parler & the dining rm. & kichen & up stares a rm. for I & Grace & a rm. for the kids & a rm. where you & Mary can sleep when you come to vissit us & a rm. for the hired girl if we ever have 1. Then of corse they will be a bath rm. The house is 2 storys besides the cellar & the house is going to be wood painted green & a frt. & back porch. It will be het with hot water from the boiler down cellar & besides we will have a fire place in the parlor. They will be gas & electrick lts. & all moderate conveenyenses.

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Its going to be set bk. 50 ft. off the st. & that will give us a big lawn beside a big bk. yd. where we can have chickens & a garden.

Its all in the contrack & the contracker cant get a way from it because if he does he wont get no money & the $2000 includs evry thing & hes got to be all done with the house by the 1 of march & the archateck over looks evry thing & sees that all the work is o k so I dont half to do no worring but all I half to do is to pay so much per wk. down to the bank. If Id knew how easy it was Id of build a house long a go but I thot a man should ought to know some thing a bout building him self before he tackeld it but a man dont half to know nothing because the archateck takes it all off of his hands & does all the worring for $100. Well Charley I got to shave & go down to the bank. You better get busy & get in to the game Charley & dont stay cooped up in a flat all your life.

Best rgds. to Mary.

F. A. Gross.

Chicago, Nov. 16—

Brother Charley. Well Charley I dont see how it is that these banks ever gos broke & blows up & they take a bout as many chances as the phone Co. that makes you put in your nickle before you get a hold of central. & here the papers keeps after us for not halling in all the stick up men they is on the sts. & dont never

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say nothing a bout halling in these here banks that is the worst stick ups they is. I went down to the bank yest. p m & seen the man in the lone dept. & showed him the lot was all payed for & I had the plans all fixed up for the house & he says how much is the house going to cost & I told him $2000 & then he stalled a round for ½ a hour & come back & asked me how much did I want to borry & I says $2000 & he says well we will lone you $2000 but not no more then that & I says who asked you to lone more then that & then he says let me see your contrack with the contrackter & I showed it to him & he says the only way we do busness is to have enough money to pay for evry thing includeing the extras & the archateck & all that & we do the paying down here to the bank & you dont have nothing to do with it but we keep the money and pay it out on the orders of the archateck. I says all right that's all right with me & I wont half to worry a bout it. He says you will half to indors the archatecks orders & I says all right.

Then he got a pensil & a peace of paper & says how much do you owe the archateck & I told him & then he says they aint nothing in the contrack a bout electrick light fixtures or finnished hard ware or wall paper so I called up the archateck & he says no they dident never includ them things because they was picked out to sute our tast after the house was build. So I come back from the phone & told the man we would pick them things out after words & pay for them our self

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& he says o no you wont because we got to have all the money here to cover all the expences. I says well then add it up what you think it will be & I will borry that much more but he says no $2000 is all we can lone you. I says well them things wont come for a long wile & meen time they can be building the house & long before they get it build I will give you the rest of the money but he says no your own moneys got to be payed out 1st. & ourn after words. So I called up Grace & told her a bout it & she says how much extra will it be & I got the man to figure it up & he says the total would be $305 besides the $2000 & the extra $305 is $75 for the archateck & $70 for hard ware & $50 for wall paper & $50 for electrick lt. fixtures & $30 for insurence & $30 more for the banks comishan which I got to pay the bank for there trouble when Im the 1 thats haveing the trouble. The insurence is for 5 yrs. & if the house burns the bank gets the insurence & I dont get nothing but I pay for the insurence & then besides all that they will be $25 more that the bank sokes me for geting an other garantee polisy for them self so they will be sure the title is o k & I all ready payed $25 to find out the same thing & Im satisfide but I got to pay for an other 1 for the bank.

Well Charley I got to dig up $330 some wheres & I dont know where it will be at but its got to be some wheres or they wont be no house & winters geting closter all the wile. Dont never get mixed up in noth-

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ing like this Charley. If it wasent to late Id tell the bank to go to.

Fred A. Gross.

Chicago, Nov. 20—

Brother Charley. Wear started at last & Grace borryed the extra $330 off of her old man & Ive gave it to the bank & now they got it all tho there suposed to be loneing it to me & I pay the int. & the comishon & all that & dont never even see the money or dont know weather they is any or not. But what do you think Charley the bank wont even let me pay it back when I get it but I got to wait 2 yrs. & ½ & pay int. all that time before I can pay it all up even if I should pick up a million dollars on the st. tomorrow & I cant pay so much per wk. but I got to pay it this way. 6% int. twict a yr. besides paying back on the prinsipal evry yr. for 5 yrs. unless I want to pay it all up in 2 & ½ yrs. & if I dont it will be $400 evry yr. for 5 yrs. besides the int.

& yet the papers keeps after us and pans the life out of us because theys 1 or 2 stick up men a round town.

I had to bring the contrackter to the bank with me & him & the man in the bank went over the contrack to gether & fixed up how he was going to get payed & he gets a little at a time & the sub contrackter hes

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hired for the diffrent parts of the house gets there money when ever the contrackter tells the archateck they got some comeing & then the archateck signs a order on the bank & I in dors the order but before the archateck signs the order he over looks the work & sees that its o k so I dont half to do no worring a bout that.

Well theys 1 good thing Charley I wont half to lay a side no $30 per wk. but will only half to lay a side a bout $45 per mo. provideing I dont want to get all cleaned up till I half to which is 5 yrs. from now but if I want to get all cleaned up as soon as I can which is 2½ yrs. I will half to lay a side a bout $80 per mo. & I guess thats what I will do. We dont half to worry a bout the $330 Grace borryed off her old man because he sends her $100 evry berth day & he wont half to send her nothing for 3 yrs. & we will be all square.

Fred A. Gross.

Chicago, Nov. 29—

Dear Charley. Well Charley they started work on the house & what do you think they done right off the real. They dug the foundashun the rong way of the lot & now they got to do it all over again but it wont cost me nothing because its there own fault & they dug the foundashun like as if the long way of the house was going to run the way the st. & it dont run that way in the plans & they got to fill in part of what they dug out & do some more

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diging & it dont matter but it takes time & if they dont hurry up & get the foundashun layed the ground will be froze stiff & they cant get started before winter. I told Grace to let them go a head & build the house the way they started but her and the archateck give me the laugh & so there going to have it did over.

It snowed a little this a m but the archateck says that dont make no diffrence as long is it dont freez hard & the ground gets froze. You see the foundashun is concreet & if it should get froze it might maybe crack some time & brake & give a way & the house might may be fall down on our head.

Well Charley I guess things will go a long o k now & Im glad wear started & if I was you I would get in to the game because liveing in a house is the only way to live when you got childern & I guess its all right for the bank to have all my money & all the papers a bout the house & lot because this is a old bank & no chance of blowing up but it seems kind a funny that I cant keep the papers or nothing to show that I own a lot or own any thing but liveing in a house is the only thing when you got childern & speaking of childern how is little May & both Ed & the baby is geting a long o k.

Kindest rgds. from I & Grace.

F. A. Gross.

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Chicago, Dec. 23—

Brother Charley. This is to wish you a mary xmas & Charley I know you will exxcus I & Grace from not sending nothing to you & Mary this yr. but this house building has got me on the jump & I cant spend a nickle on nothing this yr. Grace is sending little May a box of candy that she made her self & next xmas may be we will be better fixed & can send you some thing as usul but you can see where wear up against it this yr. & cant send nothing because things cost a hole lot more then I thot or I wouldent never of started to build.

The latest is the archateck told me we should ought to do some gradeing on the lot a round the house because the weather was so good & then we wouldent have to do no gradeing in the spring but could get busy right a way & fix up the lawn & plant the grass seeds. Well I told Grace a bout it & she says it was in the contrack that the contrackter had to do the gradeing with the dirt that was dug out of the ground where the foundashun is at & I told the archateck a bout that & he says on acct of there diging the foundashun the rong way at the start they wasent no dirt left over because they had to fill in where they dug out and shouldent of dug so I had to go & get a hold of a man to come & do some gradeing a round the house & he stuck me up for $60 but thats all over now & out of the way.

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Then Grace found out that they was only 2 of the rms. up stares that theys a place for closets in them & I says 2 closets was enough but she says no they got to be closets in all 4 of the rms. up stares & I asked the archateck a bout it & he says it was foolish, but Grace kicked like a mule & the archateck says he could put in the closets but it would

make them 2 rms. smaller. I asked him if it would cost more money & he says no he dident think so so we had him go a head & make plans for 2 more closets & yest. he come & told me it would cost $50 more & I says I thot you told me it wouldent cost nothing more & he says I thot so my self but I was miss taken. So what could a man do but pay the extra $50 only I aint payed it yet but will half to.

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But the house is geting a long fine & the out side is most all up & they are in a hurry to get the roof finnished before the real bad snow comes & as soon is they get the roof on they wont care if the weather is rotten or o k.

Best wishes for a mary xmas to you & Mary & little May & kind rgds. & I know youll see how it is.

Fred A. Gross.

Chicago, Jan. 21—

Dear Charley. They got me all most drove crazy & if any body ever says to you build a house bust them in the jaw. The archateck keeps ringing me up on the phone all the wile a bout 5 times a day & asking do I want this or that & what do I know a bout it & he is getting payed for doing the worring but in sted of him doing it he lays it all off on to me, some times he wants to know do we want a tin or ivory bath tub & its in the contrack for us to have a ivory bath tub but when I tell him that he says I thot you might of wanted tin because ivorys going to cost more money & when I say what do I care what it costs because all I half to pay is what the contrack calls for then he says the price of ivorys went up & we cant put it in for the money I thot we could so I & Grace argu it out & then tell him to go a head & its $25 or $30 more or what ever it is.

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Then he keeps wanting me to tell him if we want this or that & how do I know what is it we want when its all in the contrack & he should ought to know with out bothering me. & besides that the real estate man told me that taxes was pretty near nothing in Allison but I got notise to day that I owe $40 taxes & if thats pretty near nothing Im glad it aint no big amt.

Then an other thing when the archateck drawed the plans he made a misstake a bout putting in the radiators for the hot water heat & he aint got enough of them in & hes going to put in 2 extra 1s and he aint told me yet what that will amt. to but it will be a plenty.

Where I was going to lay a side $80 per mo. I aint laying nothing a side & they dont seem to be no chance of ever saveing a nickle un lest we dont eat nothing & you know Charley I wasent never the man to starv my self to death. I told the man down to the bank a bout the radiators & the bath tub & he says I should ought to of had some sort of writen contrack with the archateck so he couldent keep hanging them things on me all the wile but its to late now & any way I guess they wont be no more trouble tho I wisht they would go a head & not worry me to death asking them questions.

Rgds. to Mary.

F. A. Gross.

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Chicago, Feb. 2—

Brother Charley. Well Charley Im up against it now right. We was so busy down to the station & a round town that I dident get out to Allison for 2 wks. & I went out there yest. & went to the house & they wasent no body working & I seen 1 of the naybers & they says they hasent been no body working for a wk. tho the weathers been grand & they should ought to be husling on the job to get it finnished before the 1 of march.

I called the archateck up & asked him what was comeing off & he says the contrackter couldent do no more till he got some more lumber & the lumber Co. wouldent let the contrackter have no more because it wouldent trust him for no more money & if I would garantee the money all right. What do you know a bout that Charley?

I says why should I garantee the money when its all down to the bank & the archateck says that dident make no diffrence to the lumber Co. because the contrackter all ready got all the lumber that was called for in the contrack & now he wanted some more & I says what for & he says the contrackter used more lumber then the archateck thot they was going to need. Well I says I wouldent garantee nothing & the archateck says he wouldent neither if he was me but if we couldent get no more lumber the work would be held up till we did get some so there you are.

I talked to the man down to the bank & he says the

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contrackter wasent no good & dident have no credit & if he used more lumber then the contrack called for he should ought to pay for it him self. I called up the contrackter & told him a bout it & he says he was sick of the job any way & I could go jump in the lake because he wasent going to do no job where he was loosing money.

I told them that down to the bank & the man says

I could make the contrackter finnish the job but if he couldent get no credit & dident want to finnish the job I wouldent have no house for a yr. or just as long as the contrackter felt like. I says no because it says right in the contrack that the house must be all done by the 1 of march & the man at the bank says yes but suppose it aint done then what will you do a bout it. I says I will sue the contrackter and they says you couldent get a nickle because theys no penalty in the contrack for him not geting threw by the 1 of march & even if they was you couldent get nothing out of

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him if hes broke & hes probly broke or else they wouldent be no trouble a bout him geting credit.

So I went to the archateck & talked it over with him & he says the contracter under bid on the contrack & seen he couldn't build no house like mine for no $2000 & thats why he wanted to quit & I says that may be so but what do I care if he looses money its his own falt & we will make him go a head & finnish the job.

Then the archateck says yes you could do that but you couldent make him finnish it in no spesifide time & he might be 10 yrs. doing it so the best thing you can do now is let me get a boss carpenter to finnish the job & let all the sub contrackters go a head with there part & the carpenter can do the work the contrackter was going to do & you can pay him by the wk.

I says how much more will that cost. He says hardly any more & you will get the job finnished quick that way so I says all right go a head & hire a carpenter so hes going to hire a carpenter but he says they aint no chance in the world of getting the house build by the 1 of march & may be not till the middle of march & I & Grace all ready had the flat sub letted to a famly from the 1 of march to the 1 of May & they was going to keep it after words for them self so now I & Grace will half to stay at some hotel or some wheres from the 1 of march till the house is finnished & it will cost us some more money besides storeing our furnitur for a couple wks.

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But may be by the 1 of march the house will be so as we can stick the furnitur in it but I dont know & they got me worred & the archateck aint worrying at all tho thats what he gets payed for. I give him $100 to worry for me & then I take his job a way from him. If it would do me any good to go out to that contrackters house & brake his jaw I would do it but what would that get me. Nothing.

I hope the archateck can get a hold of a good carpenter right a way & rush the job threw but theys no teling how long it will be & I lerned all ready not to look for no good luck.

Kindest to Mary.

Fred A. Gross.

Chicago, Feb. 24—

Dear Charley. What do you supose has come off now. the archateck is sick & cant be on the job no more & left the work to his cousin & how do I know weather the cousin knows a house from a box car but what can I do. I asked the cousin what was the matter with the archateck & he says it was a nervous brake down & he thot he got sick worring a bout my house because evry thing had went rong. I says he aint did no more worring then me & I dont even get payed for worring.

Well the cousin is worse then the archateck a bout asking questions that I dont know nothing a bout

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what to anser & if asking questions made the archateck sick his cousin wont live a wk.

A cording to the contrack the house should ought to be finished a wk. from now but it aint no further a long then it was in januery as far is I can see & this here boss carpenter they got working wouldent never be pinched for speed. I was out there today & asked him how much longer he would be working & he says I cant go very fast now because Im waiting for them to bring the mill work. So I got to call up the mill work people to-morrow. The longer they dont deliver the mill work the longer it will take them to be threw with the house & Im paying this here carpenter by the day and besides that we got to go & bord some wheres after the 1 of march because the real estate people took the flat off of our hands when we told them we wanted to get a way the 1 of march & they all ready sined up with them people that we had the flat sub letted to & we will half to move out on or before next tues. Where wear going to I dont know & I guess we might as well burn up the furnitur & go & throw our self in the lake.

Your lucky Charley that you aint in no jam like this & if any body ever pulls this home stuff on you bust them in the jaw.

F. A. Gross.

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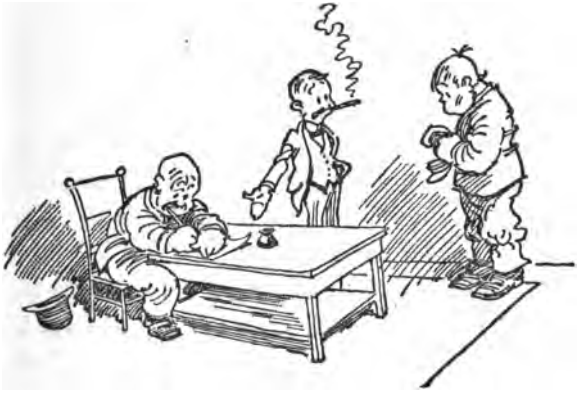
Chicago, Feb. 27—

Brother Charley. Well Charley we finely got the mill work people a couple of swedes to bring there stuff a round but before they brung it I & they was down to the bank 4 times argueing & they was scared they wasent going to get there money because they had sined a contrack with the contrackter that blowed up on me & thot because they dident have no contrack



with me I was going to beat them out of there stuff.

The man at the bank kept telling them that the money was right there for them when they got there work delivered but that dident do no good & the swede that was down there with me called the bank a lire & me a lire & a crook & I called him some things to only I couldent call him as bad as he is.

Well if it wasent for haveing the job held up I would of told him & his mill work to go to h-ell but what

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could I do because it would take 3 wks. to get the work did some wheres else & all that time we would be paying bord & paying the carpenter to & not getting no where. So finely I had to sine a paper garanteeing that the swede would get the money that the bank all ready had for him & that was all he wanted was my garantee tho I couldent of got the money myself with a stick of dinamite. He promused to deliver the mill work today but I wouldent give a nickle a thousand for his promuses.

Well we got a place to bord & a place to store the furnitur & its going to cost us $12 a wk. for our board & $6 to store the furnitur besides geting it moved which will cost $30 from the flat to the store house & $10 more from there to the house if the house is ever ready for it.

Thats a bout all the news I got for you this time & I wisht I had some good news but I guess Im lucky to be a live.

Rgds. to Mary. Fred A. Gross.

Chicago, March 29—

Brother Charley. Well Charley we been held up again & this time it was the electrick lt. fixtures & Grace picked them out & they cost $100 in sted of the $50 we stuck in the bank to pay for them so the extra $50 comes out of my pocket & besides that the archatecks cousin says the contrack only calls for 2 cotes

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of paint on the out side of the house where they should ought to be 3 & he can get an other cote put on for $30 which is pretty nice of him. & besides all that Im paying the carpenter now evry wk. for 5 wks. & all he gets per day is $5 so thats a bout $150 extra but if theys something left in the bank when they get all threw I will get it back or can leave it to apply on int.

The archateck is still sick yet & I havnt saw his cousin the last couple wks. but I guess the carpenters doing things o k & as far as I can see a archateck might as well stay sick all the wile for all the good he is accept drawing pitchers of the new house before its build.

F. A. Gross.

Chicago, April 13—

Dear Charley. The house is pretty near finnished Charley & it looks fine & worth all the trouble & Grace come out with me to see it yest. & is plum nuts over it so evry things o k but my troubles isent over yet & heres the lattest. The village of Allison has ordered us to put in a new cement sidewalk & we got to have a side walk up in to the yard up to the house as well as a long the st. & its going to cost a even $100.

Well thats pretty bad but that aint nothing. I asked a man a bout soing grass seeds & fixing up the yard & he says it must got to be graded 1st. I says what do

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you mean graded & he says its all ups & downs & the ground a round the house is lower all ready then the ground out by the st. I says it was in my contrack for the contrackter to grade the lot but he dident do it so I got an other man to grade it for $60. He says well then you got stung for $60 because they hasent been no gradeing did that I can see. I argude with him a bout it but he says he wouldent so no grass seeds or have anything to do with it un lest it was graded & he said he would grade it & put black dirt on it so as the grass would grow & all so put in a drive way of cement & gravvle all for $150.

Well Charley they wasent nothing for me to do but hire him & did you ever here any thing like it.

The gas has been ran in to the house from the st. & the stove should ought to be there any day now & the house is all wirde for electrick lts. & all that part of it is o k & the only thing there doing now is fixing up the flors with pollish & when thats did theyll be all threw but it takes time to do that & I wisht it was all over because wear sick of bording to say nothing of paying for the bord & paying the carpenter all the time. & I still got the finnished hard ware to pay for & thats $70 & when the 1 of july comes theyll be $60 int. to pay so you see I got some thing to worry me Charley & I bet John E. rockefellow would be worring to if he was me.

F. A. Gross.

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P. S. I put $70 in the bank to pay for the finnished hard ware all ready but some way the archatecks cousin got balled up & give some body some thing they dident have coming & the man at the bank refused to pay the order for the finnished hard ware & I went down to see why not & he says all the money was drawed out all ready & they wasent nothing left. I dont under stand it but I quit trying to under stand a bout this here house.

Allison, Ill., May 6—

Brother Charley. I bet you wont never believe it but wear in our house & we been here 2 hole days. The furniturs here & the movers busted it all to peaces but we dont mind a little thing like that. Grace is tickled to death & as long as shes plesed its all o k but I got so much to do I aint got much time to write.

I called up the archateck today to see would he come out & see if things looked o k to him but he was still sick yet but the cousin come out & we was haveing supper & he set down with us tho we dident have nothing to eat because the gas stove aint come yet & even if it come it wouldent do no good because the gas aint conected. Well the archatecks cousin says the house looks o k to him accept that theys a few things the matter & should ought to be fixed up. He says you got a mitey nice place here for $2000 besides what you payed for the lot. I says where do

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you get that stuff $2000 besides what we payed for the lot. We payed $1500 for the lot besides int. & I dont know how much more then $2000 the house is going to cost us but I bet its closter to $3000 & then I & him set down & figured it up. They aint no chance now for getting the bank payed up before the 5 yrs. is up so 1st theys $2000 & then theys $320 int. on the $2000. Then theys $25 for the garantee polisy that I payed when I got the lot & $25 for an other 1 when I got the money at the bank. And I payed for the finnished hard ware twict & thats $70 each time or $140. Then I give the bank $30 for insurence & $30 for comishon & I give them $75 for my bal. on what I owed the archateck & the $25 I give him to start with & $50 for the wall paper. That money I give them for the archateck & the wall paper was payed out some wheres else so I pay that twict & $60 for gradeing but that gradeing dident take so I payed $150 more for the same job the 2d. time & $50 for 2 extra closets in the house & $300 for the carpenter that done the work when the contrackter quit on me & $100 for cement walk & its all cracked all ready & $46 for moveing & storeing the furnitur & its all busted to peaces & $50 extra for electrick lt. fixtures because Grace seen some she liked & of corse they was the most expensiv & $30 for a extra cote of paint that I dont know weather we needed it or not & I dont know weather it was ever put on & $96 for our bord bill where we stayed at.

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Well we figured that all up & it amts. to $1600 & that dont include the $2000 or the $1500 for the lot so what was suposed to cost me a bout $3600 or $3700 is going to cost me $5300 & I aint got a cent in the world & theys int. do the 1 of July & besides that we got to buy cole to heat the water for the bath tub & wash basens because they was suposed to put in a gas heater but they made a miss take & put in a cole heater & the archatecks cousin is sorry they made

the miss take but says we can get it changed to a gas heater for a bout $125.

After hed went I looked a round & I just got threw looking & I found out that all as is the matter with the house is that the doors thats shut dont open & the doors thats open dont shut & you cant lock none of them & you cant open none of the windows which is all o k now because it aint hot yet & we aint got

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no screens tho we ordered them 1 mo. a go & theyll cost $50 more & theys no room in the kichen for a stove or a table & the roof of the house leeks & we aint got no electrick lamps that we ordered when the fixtures was put in & we will half to go to bed when it gets dark nights un lest we want to run a round with candles like I been doing & the cellers full of water & besides that the sewer backs up in to the cellar from the st.

But the kids seems to be havein' a h-ell of a time espeshaly little Ed. & Grace is running a round like a chicken with there head off & tickled to death so what kick have I got comeing even if I owe more money then I'll ever see & my hares turned gray & the papers is paning the life out of the dept. because theys 1 or 2 stick up men a round town.

Tommorrow I got to buy some cole to run the heater & coles only $8 a ton out here & I got to buy a refidjerater because we was suposed to have 1 build in but they left it out while the archateck was sick & I got to get a plumer to take the water out of the celler & see weather he cant coax the sewer to stay out doors. I dont know where theyll put the gas stove if they bring it & if we was to put both the gas stove & the kitchen table in the kitchen Grace would half to cut her self in 2 to get in & cook the meals or wash the dishs. Well Charley Im going to bed & its 10 to 1 the bed will brake down but if it

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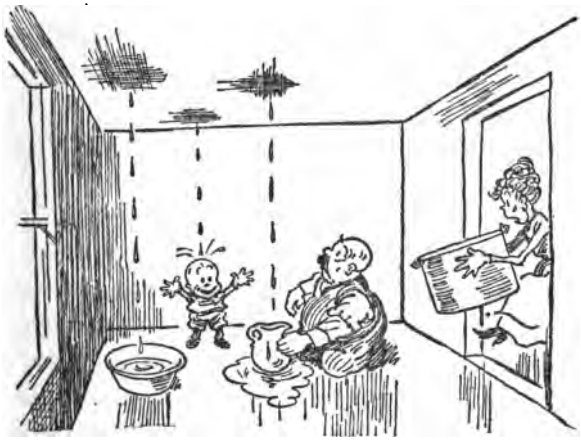
does Ill lay right there on the floor & not never know the diffrence.

Rgds. to Mary. Fred A. Gross.

Allison, Ill., June 25—

Brother Charley. Well Charley we been liveing in the house a bout 6 wks. now & the gas stoves been here 4 days & I dont know how they remembered to bring it & we finely managed to get 2 of the windows open



& its been frightful hot but we dont dare keep them open very long to a time because the screens isent here yet. We got the stove & the table both in the kichen & they aint no danger of me going in the kichen & bothering Grace because if I went in there it would take this here Houdini to get me out.

Well Charley the archateck finely got all o k again

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and come out to see us & what do you think he pulled on me. He says my cousin was telling me that your place cost $1600 more than you figured & I says yes it did. So just as he was going he left me a bill for $80 & he says he was suposed to get 5% of the cost of the house & if they was $1600 extras he should ought to have $80 more. Do you know what I says to him. I says wait a minut you got it figured rong. I bought a lawn more today to cut the grass when it comes up & it cost me $8 so I think you should ought to add on 40 cents. Then I shut the door as clost as it will shut & he beat it & stopped out side to take some pitchers of the house & I supose he will try to soke me 5% of what it cost to get them pitchers developped.

Well Charley next wk. I got to pay the 1st. int. on the lone down to the bank & I dont know where the moneys comeing from & I says some thing a bout it to Grace & she says she would write & ask her old man. Hes a good old scout Charley & I bet he will come acrost but I hate to be touching him all the wile. But theys 1 thing sure he wont never half to give Grace no more berth day pressents not even if he lives 20 yrs. more.

The Walters was out to see us today & there tickled to death with the house & they got the building bug now. Well Charley after alls said & did its the only life when you got children & if I was you Id get busy & get in to the game.

Kindest to Mary. Fred A. Gross.

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CHAPTER II

WELCOME TO OUR CITY

Allison, Ill., July 8.

Brother Charley. Well Charley evry things going a long smoth & last wk. I payed the 1st. int. on my lone down to the bank and now I dont half to worry a bout that again untill Jan. Graces old man come acrost with the money so as I could pay the int. & dident make no holler a bout it but I bet he wishes I & Grace had of stuck in our flat over on the s. side insted of building because we was not never so hard up when we was liveing in the flat that we had to ask him to pay our rent.

I dont like to be no drag on the old man but you can see how it is Charley or that is you could see if you had build a house. It looks like you dont run up agin the real expences until youve got it all build. I allways thot it was real old houses that half to be repared & fixed up all the wile but Im finding out now that the new ones is twict as bad as the old ones.

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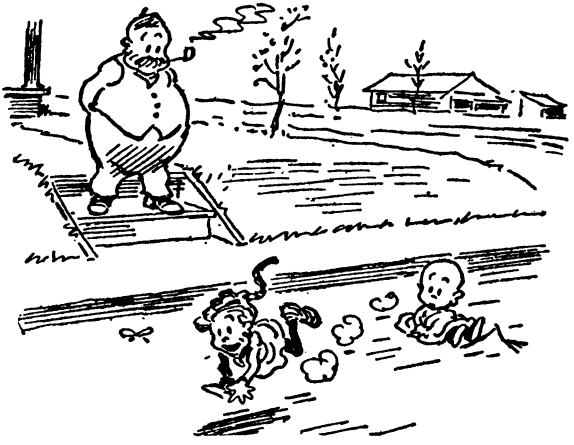
But dont think we aint satisfide Charley because wear perfectly satisfide so dont get the idear we aint satisfide & you couldent higher Grace & I to go back in town & live in a flat because they aint nothing to that kind of liveing & this has got it beat all hollo. The babys is a hole lot better than they was in the city.



That is they would be if the house wasent damp & if it wasent for the smell of the paint that I guess we aint never going to get rid of it. But they aint all cooped up like they was in Chi & now they can get out & run a round with out no danger of falling under a st. car & geting there leg cut off. By a st. car.

Of corse we miss the Walters & the Arnolds & others that we made frends of them in the city a speshally Grace but as I say if they cared any thing a bout us

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they could get out here & see us because they know Grace cant get a way on acct. the babys & besides this towns got plenty of fine peopl liveing in this town & as soon is we get acquainted we can for get all a bout the peopl we knowed in Chi & not never think a bout them.

I guess the last time I wrote to you we wasent no wheres near setteled but wear pretty well setteled now & things a round the house is beginning to look O. K. & you can open most of the windows if you start them with a crow bar & then give a quick jerk.

Kindest to Mary.

Fred A. Gross.

Allison Ill., July 24.

Dear Charley. I supose you been geting a hole lot of rain to because I see in the paper where its been raining all over the u s & if it rains any more I will half to buy 1 of these here divvers sutes to go down in the basemunt with it & fix the heater that we heat the hot water with. A bout the 2d. day it beggin to rain the water beggin runing in the basemunt & now its pretty near as deep like it was in the brandywine crick where I & you lerned to swim do you remember Charley. I called up the plummer & he come up & seen it & says the drane pipes would carry it off & I had to give him $.50 cents for telling me that & it wasent true at that because they aint carryed none of it off as far

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is I can see & if a plummer gets $.50 a peace for evry time he lise to you I wonder what does he charge when he tells a man the truth only I guess that dont never hapen. Well any way you could dive off the top step of the stares in to the basemunt & not bump your head on the floor & Grace says I should ought to dig some angel worms out in the yard & set on the basemunt stares & fish but I guess all the fish in the house is

liveing up stares. I mean wear the fish for building a house. Suckers see Charley.

An other good thing all the wood that was left over from building the house is down in the basemunt & Grace has been useing it up pretty fast building fires

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in the fire place all tho its been so hot outdoors & in the house to that you cant hardly stand it but she says the fire looks so pretty that she would like to keep it burning all the wile & why not when we got all that wood. Well I says that wood will burn just as good in the winter time when you need a fire in the fire place & it will look just as pretty burning when its cold & the sooner you burn up all that extra wood the sooner we will half to buy some reglar wood to burn. I says if your going to throw a way money just to make things look pretty why dont you buy a car lode of dimonds & scatter them a round the front yard. They would look swell as long as they last.

Well she says the fire keeps me from geting lonesom. I says if your lonesom why dont you dress the babys up & go out and see some body & she says I aint got no close to ware thats good enough for this place so my little talk is going to cost me $20.00 dollars because shes going to buy some clothes & have a couple dresses made up. But as I say we can save on fire wood as long as the basemunts full of water because you cant get to where the wood is at with out buying a sale boat or some thing & even if you got the wood it wouldent burn on acct. it being soked.

Regards to Mary & we wisht you could get out & see us.

F. A. Gross.

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Allison, Ill., Aug. 13.

Brother Charley. Well Charley it looks now like we was going to bust in to socitey & Grace wont be lonesom no more. She got her close made & all finnished up 2 days a go all ready & I thot shed go calling right a way but she says no it wouldent be right to take the childern a long the 1st. time she interduced her self to the peopl out here on acct. they might cut up & rase the devvil & may be brake some thing in some strangers house so she says it was up to me to stay home with the childern wile she went a round & made a few calls & Im going to stay home with the babys next Sun. after noon because thats the 1st. day I can get off on acct. theys 2 other fellows in the dept. laying off now & the rest of us is kept pretty busy. But of corse me not being able to go a long with her & make the calls Ive got to get some cards printed so she can stick them on the piano or some wheres in the house where shes calling at so it looks like I wanted to come but couldent.

Grace says she dident hardly know where to make the calls because we dont know where no body lives that is we dont know if the famly 2 doors a way from us is pres. of the gas co. or runs a hawk shop. But I told her the best way to do was start right in on this side of the st. we live on & go from house to house & if she seen after she got in that the peopl wasent no good she could say she made a miss take. The name of the

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peopl that lives next door is Hamilton because thats what the real estate man told us when we got the lot so you see we know his name & when Grace gos up to the door & says is Mr. Hamilton in they will be tickeld to deth on acct. of us knowing there name & wile she is calling on Mr. Hamilton she can feel a round until she knows what is the name of the peopl that lives on the other side of them & so on.

She wont stay more than 1 hour or so in 1 place the 1st. time & she wont be able to cover more than the 1st. 3 houses the 1st. day, but probly she will find 1 or 2 of the ladies thats good sports & will be willing to come over & stay with the childern a day or 2 next wk. so as Grace can go & call on the other peopl a long the st. with out waiting for the next P. M. I can lay off.

The Hamiltons has got a swell big house build out of stones or concrete blocks & they probly got a bbl. of money but you know the old saying Charley all men was crated free and wear just as good is them even if we got all my pay for the next 30 yrs. spent all ready.

Best to Mary.

F. A. Gross.

Allison, Ill., Aug. 16.

Brother Charley. Well Charley Grace wont be lonesom no more because now she called on 4 famlys a long the st. to-day insted of 3 like she intend it & of corse the more you call on the more of them has got to

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call on you back. The reason she made it 4 insted of 3 was on acct. of her only staying to the Hamiltons ¼ of a hr. because they says they was going out some wheres & would half to leave her.

We had a early dinner & she got over to the Hamiltons a bout 1 in the P. M. & she was toged up in her new close & looked like a million $.

She told me all a bout it when she come home. A womman come to the door & Grace says how do you do Mrs. Hamilton I was afrade youd be out & the womman says who did you want to see & Grace says you or Mr. Hamilton or the both of them & the womman says I will see are they in. So the womman says what name & Grace says Grace Gross & the womman says have you got a card a long with you & Grace dident have none but the cards I had printed so she give her one of them. They set me back $.50 for 100 of them Charley but I thot I might as well make it a good 1 wile I was doing it & besides if Grace dont loose none of them 100 should ought to last her untill shes called on the hole town. The cards says on them F. A. Gross asst. Chief of Detectives Chicago Police dept. & then down on the bottom 20 years in the service in red tipe.

The higher girl left Grace standing in the vestry bull & pretty soon a man come out & he was Mr. Hamilton & he ast Grace to come in the parler & set down so Grace went in & Mr. Hamilton says what can I do for you & Grace was kind of im barrist & couldent say nothing & Mr. Hamilton says aint you made a miss

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take or may be you think I can give you some informashun a bout some thing & Grace seen that was a good chance to find out what was the name of the peopl that lived in the next house next to the Hamiltons so she ast him & he says there name is Carpenter & she says what busness was they in & Mr. Hamilton says if you

want to find out any thing more a bout them you will half to ask them your self. So Grace says it dident make no diffrunts weather she knowed any thing more a bout them or not & then she says hows your wife & Mr. Hamilton says what are you trying to get at. He says Im sure you must of made some miss take because nether I or Mrs. Hamilton have did any thing against the law or the Carpenters nether & Grace says what do you mean & Mr. Hamilton says what do you mean

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yourself comeing a round trying to pry in to some bodys affares. We aint use to receiving calls from female detectives. & then all of a sudden Grace caught on to what was he getting at.

You see Charley Mr. Hamilton thot she was a detective on acct. the card shed give the higher girl & he thot it was her card & not my card & when Grace seen what had come off she pretty near died laughing & all the wile Mr. Hamilton just stood there & looked at her & finely when she could say some thing she says thats a grate joke & Mr. Hamilton says may be it is but its over my head & then Grace explaned it to him the hole thing & told him we was his new neighbors & she was just paying him a frendily call so pretty soon be beggin laughing to & says he would call his wife because the joke was too good to keep. His wife come in & Grace ast her if Mr. Hamilton had told her a bout his miss take & she says no so Grace had to explane it all over again only Mrs. Hamilton must of ett to much dinner. She dident laugh at all but just set there like she was in pane & pretty soon she says she was sorry Grace couldent stay any longer but her & Mr. Hamilton was going out & would Grace excuse them & Grace says sure & got up to go but then Mr. Hamilton come in & told Grace to be sure and hand 1 of them cards to who ever come to the door over to Carpenters so Grace promussed she would & then she says good-by to Mr. & Mrs. Hamilton & told them to be sure & come over & see us & Mr. Hamilton says he certunly would weather

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Mrs. Hamilton did or dident & he was just kidding a little but Mrs Hamilton must of got jellus a bout him & Grace jolling each other because she slamed the front door when Grace come out. Or else as I say she ett to much dinner probly.

So then Grace went to the Carpenters & rung the door bell & Mr. Carpenter him self come to the door & she give him 1 of the cards & he says well whats the charge & she seen he was makeing the same miss take Mr. Hamilton made so she went a long with it & says she would like to talk to he & his wife a few minuts & he says you can talk to me but I cant bother my wife because she aint finnished her dinner & then Grace told him to go a head and finnish his dinner to but he says he wouldent untill she told him what she wanted so she explained the joke & told him what come off over to Hamiltons & then he laughed & says he would finnish his dinner & bring his wife in so Grace set there in the parler a wile & finely Mr. & Mrs. Carpenter come in & she set there talking to them pretty near a hr.

& they had a grate time talking & laughing & wile she was there some body come to the front door & Mr. Carpenter went to the door & Grace says it sounded like Mr. Hamiltons voice out side the door & he ast Mr. Carpenter was he arested & Mr. Carpenter went out on the porch & Grace couldent hear what was they saying but of corse they was come pareing nots a bout the joke because she herd them laughing out on the porch. Well finely Mr. Carpenter come in again &

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finely Mrs. Carpenter ast Grace dident she have some more calls to make so Grace says she did & she left the Carpenters & forgot to find out from them what was the name of the peopl that live in the 3d. house a way from us but it dident make no diffruns because the woman that come to the door at the next house told her the name & the name is Carry & Mr. Carrys the man that keeps the grosery store or 1 of them & Grace & Mrs. Carry had a nice long talk & Grace told her a bout what come off at Hamiltons & Carpenters & Mrs. Carry says she would bet Grace that they wouldent nether the Hamiltons or the Carpenters call on us & Grace says why not & Mrs Carry says because they aint nether 1 of them called on me yet & I have been here over 1 yr. & Grace says well did you call on them & Mrs. Carry says of corse not so they must be some bad blood some wheres that we dont know nothing a bout.

Well Grace went to Moreheads from Carrys & seen the Moreheads & then come home & you can bet I was glad when she finely got home because little Ed & the baby both of them gets pretty mad a bout 5 P. M. in the afternoon & they was giveing me all I could do.

& Mrs. Carry says next time Grace wants to go out she can bring the babys over to her house & the higher girl will watch them.

Rgds. to Mary.

F. A. Gross.

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Allison, Ill., Aug. 31.

Dear Charley. Well Charley they aint nothing much come off since the last time I wrote you a letter and they aint nothing much to write a bout & I wouldent be writeing only I was figureing on takeing a bath to-night and I cant take no bath so Im writeing you a letter insted and why I cant take no bath is because the waters shut off all over town & the water co. says may be it wont be turned on for 2 or 3 days.

Of corse I can wash my hands down town to head quarters but Grace or the kids cant wash theres unlest they go over to the Carrys where they got a sistern & that makes it pretty tough on Grace but little Ed & the baby wont make no holler and they would be tickled to deth if they dident never half to be washed.

Any way they all ways holler like they was being murdered when you touch them with soap and water. The Hamiltons has a sistern to & I ast Grace why dident she use theres on acct. it being next door to us & handy but Grace is kind of sore on Mrs. Hamilton for not comeing over to see us. She will come over all right when she gets up her nerve & I wouldent worry a bout it if I was Grace but you know how wommen feels & probly Marys the same way.

Grace has called on a bout 15 or 20 famlys now & left the kids over to the Carrys wile she was makeing the calls & her and Mrs. Carry is pretty good frends & Mr. & Mrs. Carry comes over offen in the evning for a game of cards.

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Im thirsty and I guess its a good thing we got a couple cases of beer in the house because they aint no water and I and Grace can drink the beer when wear thirsty & the kids can drink milk so we wont starve to deth because of some thing to drink only we cant take no bath in beer or milk.

The man from the water co. says this dont happen offen I mean the pump brakeing down & he says I want to remember that Im saveing money on water bills all the wile they aint no water.

Regards to Mary.

Fred A. Gross.

Allison, Ill., Sep. 14.

Brother Charley. Well Charley Im planing a big surprise for Grace and the reason Im doing it is because shes been feeling so bad over them peopl not comeing to see her. Im going to have the Hamiltons & the Carpenters over here to dinner Sun. & Grace knows theys going to be Co. but she thinks Ive ast the Walters to come out from town. I had to tell her some body was comeing so as she would be sure and have enough to eat so I told her the Walters was comeing & she will be supprised & tickeled to deth when she sees it aint the Walters but the Hamiltons & Carpenters.

The idear come to me when I was down town yest. & the way it come to me I was trying to figure out some way to cheer Grace up. So I thot of this idear & then

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I set down & tride to write a letter to them peopl asking them to come & it took me so long to write the 1st. 1 that I seen I wouldent never have time for nothing else if I wrote 2 of them so I ast the tipewriter in the chiefs office would she write a couple of letters for me. I & her frammed them up together. In the letters I says my wife would like to have them come over to dinner Sun. noon & it wasent going to be no big party so they could ware what ever they had & not feel a shamed & we wouldent dress up much our self so they wouldent need to. The tipewriter dident only half to write the letter onct because she put a peace of this here copy paper in bet. the regular paper & wrote both the letters at onct only changed the names at the top.

I cant hardly wait untill Sun. and see how supprised & tickeled Grace will be.

Rgds. to Mary. Fred A. Gross.

Allison, Ill., Sep. 18.

Brother Charley. Well Charley Im the 1 that got the supprise and not Grace. And besides a supprise I got a bad scare to because Grace carryed on so that I thot she was going to be took down sick. What do you think of them bums Charley I mean the Hamiltons & Carpenters. When they dident pay no tension or send me no anser to the letter I wrote them I thot sure they must be comeing because if they wasent comeing they would say so. Thats what I thot. But

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a long come Sun. noon & no sine of them & Grace got fichety & says what do you supose is the matter with the Walters that they dont come & I stalled her off and says may be they would come on the train that gets here at 1 a clock & she says my dinner will all be spoiled & finely after the 1 a clock train come & no body showed up I had to tell her the truth. Grace

scolded me like Id stole some money or some thing & when I says I would run over to there house & see what was the matter she says if I moved a step out side the house she would take the 2 childern & run a way & then she had histeriks & all the rest of it & she says even if them peopl had of came she would of slamed the door in there face & I dont know yet what she was sore a bout tho of corse I was a little sore myself on acct. of

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them peopl not leting me know or nothing. But Grace wasent sore at them but she was sore at me and if you can tell what license she had your a wonder.

I thot for a minut they may be might not of got my letters & then I remembered that I dident male the letters but stuck them under there doors when I come home night before last so they couldent help from getting them.

Finely I couldent stand it no longer & beat it out of the house & took a long walk. She was better when I come back & says she was sorry shed carryed on so & she supposed I thot I was trying to do the right thing but Id made a awful mes out of it & I says could I help it if them peopl dident have no manners & she says no it wasent my falt but after this she wisht I would leave her to do the inviteing to the house. She dident half to wish that Charley because Ive had more then enough for my share.

The Carrys is comeing over to-night to play cinch & may be we can get rid of some of our big Sun. dinner thats still left yet because they dident nether 1 of us have the heart to eat it.

Regards to Mary. F. A. Gross.

Allison, Ill., Oct. 3.

Dear Charley. Well Charley it looks like we wasent dead ones after all. A little boy come to the house after supper to-night & give me a letter only it wasent

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no letter but a invatation to a dance here in Allison the 17 of this mo. & the dance is being gave for the benifit of the Bellgiums that got killed in the war. This here invatation was addressed to the Hamiltons but if we get theres they got ourn so whats the diffrunts & besides you can bet I aint going over to there house to say any thing a bout it & if they dont want ourn they can come over here and get there own.

The dance is going to be down to the opra house where they give there shows when they have them. Well I guess you know how I all ways been a bout danceing Charley & never cared nothing a bout it & I was going to tell Grace of corse we wouldent go but when I give her the invatation & seen how good she felt a bout it I dident have the heart to say nothing a bout not going. I throwed the out side cover a way before I give Grace the invatation and she says are you sure its for us & I says dident the boy bring it to us & besides wont our money do them Bellgiums as much good as any body elses. Tho where the Bellgiums needs help any more than I need it I cant figure out. I dident tell Grace nothing a bout the invatation being addressed to the Hamiltons for fear shed want I should go over & change with them.

Well I says do you want me to go and she says certunly but you cant dance & I says well I can go there and set around & talk wile you dance and she says o no she wouldent do that way & if I wouldent dance she wouldent go so I says all right I will brush up &

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practice a little & may be I can get a way with it & she says you cant do nothing of the kind because the dances there dancing now isent nothing like what you use to dance the walts & the 2 step and them things. They aint danceing them things no more because now there all danceing the 1 step walk & the foxs trot and we will half to take some lessons the both of us.

I says I suppose we got a hole lot of money to throw a way on takeing danceing lessons & then she beggin to cry so I says all right you fix it up with some teacher & we will take a few lessons just enough so as to get a way with it.

So you see what Im up against now Charley & I got to take danceing lessons & then go up there & mix a round with them swell dames & get stepped on but Grace will have the time of her life & I aint got the heart to say no. The dance ticket that come along with the invatation costs $2.00 dollars & probly the lessons will cost that much more or may be more than that so Im lucky if I get a way with less than a 5 spot.

I supose youve lerned the new dances all ready Charley & I wisht you was here to take my place.

Regards to Mary.

F. A. Gross.

Allison, Ill., Oct. 8.

Brother Charley. Dident I say some thing a bout a 5 spot that this here dance busness was going

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to cost me last time I wrote you a letter. Well Charley its going to make a 5 spot look like 30 cents before its over & I wisht Id says no in the 1st. place & left Grace bellow if she wanted to. Weve tooken 1 dance ing lesson all ready & it costed $2.00 dollars & we got to take an other at the same price because we aint lerned enough yet & I got to buy some pattent leather shoes & a shirt & so 4th. because Grace says they wont be no body go up there with out being drest up in a dress sute of evning close & she laughed at me when I says I was going to ware the uneform I use to ware before I was put in plane close but I bet if I wore that uneform I wouldent be the worst looking 1 in the hall if I do say it but Grace says nothing but a evning dress sute will do so I got to rent 1 of them besides buying the junk that gos with it & the rent of the sute a lone will cost me $3.00.

Well Grace was wondring what would she do a bout the childern wile we was to the dance & I says she should ask Mrs. Carry to take care of them & she says the Carrys is probly going to so shes going to ask Mrs. Carry is she going & if she is that will mean we will half to higher a girl some wheres to come & stay with the childern wile we go to the dance.

Regards to Mary.

Fred.

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Allison, Ill., Oct. 11.

Brother Charley. Well Charley we had some more trouble since the last time I wrote you a letter only I dont know if its trouble or not but Grace feels pretty bad a bout it tho I says she shouldent ought to worry because the Carrys wasent no good any way. Grace was figureing on haveing Mrs. Carry come over & stay with the childern wile we was to the big dance next wk. if Mrs. Carry wasent going to the dance her self so when the Carrys come to play cards the other night Grace ast them was they going to the dance & they says no what dance & Grace told them & ast Mrs. Carry would she come over & take care of the childern or that is she & Mr. Carry would just half to set in the house because the childern would be a sleep only of corse it wouldent be right to go off & leave them a lone & the Carrys could just set here & play cards or do any thing they had a mind to. Well Mrs. Carry ast who was giveing the dance & Grace says the invatation was sined by Wm. Marston & he was the man that the money was to be sent to only Im going to take my money a long to the dance & give it to him at the door. Well Mrs. Carry says why Mr. Marston is the real socitey leader & Grace says well what of it & Mrs. Carry says it must of been a miss take you geting a invatation & then I buted in & says what do you mean a miss take I guess wear as good as any body & better than some & why shouldent we get a invatation & then Mrs. Car-

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ry blowed up & says I supose you think your better than I & my husband & I says no I dont think no such thing & she says well you get a invatation to the dance & we dident so if you go that will show you think your better than us.

I says it wont show no such a thing because you not geting no invatation was probly a miss take & she says no it wasent no miss take but geting 1 was the miss take & then Grace flew up & says your sore because

wear going to the dance and your not ast & then Carry & his wife & Grace & I all lost our temper & we had it hot & heavy & I guess you know Charley that we dident get none the worst of it. So finely I told them to go home and they says you dont half to tell us to go home & whats more you wont see no more of us & I says I lived 45 yrs. & got pretty fat before I ever seen you & thats a bout all that was said & they beat it

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and wear threw with them. If Mrs. Carry had of been decent we might of fixed it up for them to get ast to the next big dance only she was so sore about us getting a head of them that she couldent keep her mouth shut.

I guess you can see that Mrs. Carry aint going to take care of the childern wile wear to the dance & even if she would we wouldent let her because its 10 to 1 she would stick a knife in them or give them cloraform or some thing. And Grace will half to higher a girl from here in town to come & set in the house wile wear to the dance.

Kindest regards to your self & Mary.

Fred A. Gross.

Allison, Ill., Oct. 18.

Dear Charley. Well Charley I guess its pretty lucky I dident murder some body last night & it may be a good thing I wasent carrying my gat with me last night on acct. of it looking funny & sticking out threw the coat in my evning dress sute. I bet I would of shot some body sure & they would of had a detective up for murder for a change insted of for takeing money from stick up guys & dips. I might as well tell you what come off tho they aint no part of it Im proud of accept keeping my self from murdring some body. Grace is sick a bed over what come off & I cant talk to her a bout it & theys no use talking to the kids

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because they dont under stand & I got to tell it to some body so I guess your elected.

Well Charley we was figureing on getting up to the dance a bout 8 a clock but the sute I rented was to small for me & Grace had to make the pants of it biger a round the waste & then she had trouble her self geting her new close on & her hare all fixed up & evry thing & it was pretty close to 9 a clock before we got down to the opra house where they have the dances at. Well we went in & a servunt told us where to put our hat & then we went up stares to where the danceing is pulled off & they was a man seting at a table out side the door & he looked at us & dident say nothing so I went up to him & says who I was & he says aint you made a miss take. I says I dont know if I have or not & he says if we want police protection a round here we will ask for it. I says I aint here to work but Im here to dance & he says this here is a invatation dance & I says yes & I got a invatation & he says lets see it so I halled the ticket out of my pocket & showed it to him & he says it must of been some miss take & I says why & he says because I sent out the invatations my self I and a lady did & we dident send none to you. I says well I got 1 dident I & he says yes but I dont know how you got it. I says well I dident steal it & he says no I dont say you did but I know you wasent suposed to get no invatation because you wasent on our lists. I says well wear here any way & he says yes but if I was you I would go a long home before any body else

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got here because its a miss take & we will say no more a bout it.

Well I seen that Grace was ready to cry on acct. of disapointmunt so I made up my mind Id go threw with it so I says are you the only 1 thats got any thing to say a round here & he says no but Im 1 of them & I says well you get the rest of the officers to gather & see what they got to say a bout it & he says theys no body here yet but if you want to wait untill the rest

of the comitty comes all right I got no objection only Im just teling you for your own good that your makeing a miss take & the best thing that you can do is to go home.

Then Grace says come lets go home & I says I wouldent untill Id talked with the rest of the comitty & there we stood & stood and the guy dident even say we should set down so finely I told Grace to set down & she wouldent set down but all she could say was lets go home. Finely the peopl beggin come-

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ing & they all starred at us tho I bet we dident look no worse then they did & the Hamiltons come & the Carpenters & Grace whispered to me who they was & they dident even speak to us & finely the music beggin & they all started danceing in the room in side where we couldent see them & finely I went up to the man at the table & he says are you still here & I says you bet I am & Im in a hurry to see your comitty & he says all right youll see them quick enough as soon is the 1st. dance is over & he got up & went in the room where they was danceing & pretty soon the music stoped & he come out with 2 ladies & 3 gents with him & 1 of the gents was Carpenter.

Well the man says heres a gent that says he got a invatation to the dance & I says yes & you seen my invatation all ready. He says Yes Ill admit you had a invatation but wear going to leave it to this here comitty weather it was a miss take or not & then they wisperd to gather for a minut & then the man says its just like I told you your here threw some miss take & the best thing you can do is go home. So then I says your a fine bunch of stiffs & I looked right at this here Carpenter. I says your a swell gang of stews & before I get threw with you youll all be wareing the bracelits & I was going to tell them some more but just then this here Hamilton come out of the room where the danceing was at & says are we pinched & I says no but your libel to be & he says whats the excitement & Carpenter told him a bout

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me haveing the invatation & then it come out that Hamilton dident get no invatation & the boy that left it to our house made a miss take & we dident have none comeing & if it hadent of been for Grace bellowing & makeing a seen I would of soiled some of there collers but they was nothing for me to do but get her out of there but as I say if Id of had the old gat a long with me I bet Id of cut loose before I left there.

Well I pretty near had to carry Grace all the way home & put her to bed & douse camfer all over her face & I finely got her to sleep & sent the girl home that was there to take care of the childern but I couldent go to sleep my self & I aint slept yet & I called up the chief this a m & told him the wife was sick & I couldent come down & here it is pretty near noon & I aint even herd nothing a bout breakfast yet tho the childerns had theres because Grace remembered to give them theres but I guess she thinks Im saveing up my appetite for the refreshmunts at the next dance.

A fine bunch of stiffs eh Charley.

F. A. Gross.

Allison, Ill., Oct. 22.

Dear Brother Charley. Well Charley it looks like we would move back to the s. side if we could sell the place on acct. of Grace says she cant never spend a

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happy minut again out here & I aint so stuck on it my self. But we wont sell it for less then $1000.00 more then it costed all to gether because somebodys got to pay for whats come off & for them danceing lessons & Graces dresses & that dress sute I rent it & the shirt & shoes & all the rest of it. Grace spoke a bout moveing last night & I couldent argue against her a bout nothing the way shes feeling these days.

I promussed I would see could I sell the place & of corse if I could sell it for cash I could pay off what I owe at the bank or if I couldent sell it for cash the peopl that bought it off of me could asume the morgidge.

I will write & let you know how I come out.

This was Graces berth day & just as if she wasent feeling bad enough with out what come off she got a letter in her old man's hand writeing & she beggin to smile when she seen it & says pa dont never for get my berth day & shed for got her self for a minit & thot she was going to find 1 of them $100.00 checks like he all ways sends her on her berth day but when she opened the letter insted of a check it was a reciet for $100.00 of the money we all ready borryed off of him. Well that pretty near finnished her tho of corse you cant blame the old man tho it would of been better if he hadent wrote at all but just let it go.

I wisht I could of gave her some thing nice to make

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up for it but I guess you know I aint got no money to throw a way eh Charley.

Regards to Mary.

F. A. Gross.

Allison, Ill., Nov. 1.

Brother Charley. Well Charley we aint going to move back to the s. side or no wheres else but wear going to stay here. I seen the real estate man to-day that sold us the place & ast him what could we get for it house & all & he named a price that wasent even what I got sunk in the place & I says youll half to come a bout a $1000.00 higher then that & he says you aint got a chance in the world to get what you want so why dont you stay where your at. You wont find no better town no wheres.

So I told Grace I guessed wed half to stay & she says well all right & I ast her what come over her all of a sudden & she says she had called up Mrs. Carry & told her all about the dance & Mrs. Carry talked pretty nice a bout it and the Carrys is comeing over to-night to play cinch. & the Walters was out here to supper night before last & says they wisht they had a home like ourn in the subburbs insted of liveing in a dirty flat so you see Charley we aint so bad off after all & liveing out heres the best thing that could happen to the childern.

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So I guess they aint no danger of us moveing for a wile.

The door bell just rung so the Carrys is here & I got to close.

Best rgds. to Mary from both of us.

Fred A. Gross.

P. S. I tore this letter open again after I had it pasted up all ready. That wasent the Carrys that rung the door bell but a man & his wife name Curtis thats in the wood & coal busness out here & as nice peopl is youd want to meet. Theyd came to call on us & the Carrys come after words & we played rummy 6 hand it & they dident go home untill a bout 10 min. a go and its pretty near 1 a clock but we wasent playing cards all the wile but part of the time we was eating refreshmunts. Grace cooked up a welch rabbit & we had some beer to go with it & I guess this here Curtis dont like his beer. Wear going over to the Curtisis Mon. night & they got 1 of these here phonagrafs to dance by so I guess all that money wasent waisted eh Charley.

Regards to Mary.

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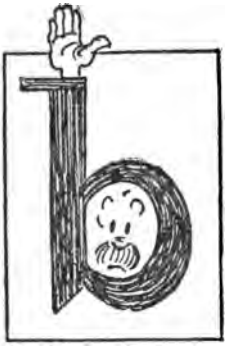
CHAPTER III

THE LAST LAUGH



Allison, Ill., Jan. 2.

rother Charley. Well Charley I supose you been haveing rotten weather down east just the same like we been haveing out here and here it is only Jan. and me all ready sick & tired of winter and wisht spring was here all ready but of corse they aint no chanct of real good weather for 4 mos. & a mans waisting time when you wish for some thing they cant have. If it done any good to wish I would be chief of police all ready and geting the big money.

Well Charley when you move out in a subburb they aint no chanct for a man to spend a quite evning at home onct in a wile because theys some thing doing evry minut out here ether Co. comes to our house to set a round & play cards & lap up our beer or else we go some wheres else to some bodys house & play cards but you couldent drowned your self in the beer they give us when wear at there house but when there at our house its diffrunt. But Grace is haveing the time of

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her life & says she dident never know what a good time was when she lived in the city & says she use to think she wouldent care nothing a bout society but its grate stuff when you get in to it so is long is she feels that way I wont try & spoil her fun tho it keeps me broke buying clean collars & geting my best close prest.

Theys a little irish girl that lives down the st. a bout 17 yrs. old & Grace highers her to come & set in the house wile wear out nights & shes got a fellow stuck on her & he comes & sets with her & Grace pays the girl $.50 a night & I guess thats pretty soft for the girl eh Charley because she gets $.50 for spending a evning in a house thats a hole lot better then her own house & pretty soft for her bow to because it dont cost him nothing for a place to spark his girl a way from her old man & old lady & when I was corting Grace it use to cost me real money to take her out some wheres so her old man couldent keep popping in on us evry time I got ready to hold her hand. By rights the girls bow should ought to pay the $.50 insted of Grace because if hes any kind of a sport it would cost him more then $.50 to take her to Hofmanns garden or some wheres else a way from her perants. But Grace says we cant leave the babys in the house a lone because they might start crying but there both to sleepy to cry in the evning & besides supose they did start crying the little irish girl & her bows probably to busy smacking each

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other to hear them & even if they herd them what would they do a bout it because I never found nothing yet that would make them kids stop crying when they wanted to cry unlest it was a shot gun or some thing. Well Grace says she thot it would be nice to show the little irish girl & her bow where we kept our beer so they could help them self if they got dry but I says nothing doing & if they want to drink our beer the

girls bow can pay $.15 a pt. for it like hed half to pay in a garden only when he was helping him self to our beer he wouldent half to tip no rotten waiters. I guess Grace thinks wear runing the county hospitle or some thing.

Well Charley I hope you & the Mrs. is getting a long O. K. & standing the bad weather O. K. & I guess they must get more for postige stamps in N. Y. city

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then they do here & is that the reason you dont write onct in a wile.

Kindest to Mary.

Fred A. Gross.

Allison, Ill. Jan. 11.

Dear Charley. Well Charley we was to a party the night before last & wear going to an other party next wk. & it takes most of my time geting my shoes shined & they talk about Chicago being a live place well Charley its like a grave yd. come pared with this place & some thing doing evry minut when your a good dresser & the peopl likes you.

The party last night was over to Curtis house the wood and coal man & no wonder his wife ast us to the party because there geting a bout $20.00 dollars per mo. out of us for 2 & ½ ton of coal & it wouldent hurt them none to give us a party onct a mo. & have champane wine but they dident give us no wine only beer & not hardley enough of that to wet your tungue & of corse Id rather have a glass of beer then all the wine in the world but when Im dry 1 or 2 bottles dont even clear my throte & they might is well give me a spoon full of butter milk & expect me to have a good time & if I was in the wood & coal busness I bet I would give my frends enough to eat and drink when they come to see me espeshaly when the peopl that comes to see you is the peopl that you might say

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buys your groserys for you. & all they give us to eat was ice cream & cake & coffee & Grace hadent gave me much supper on acct. she thot we would get a reglar meal to the party. I bet the next time I go to a party a round here I will stick a couple crackers in my pocket & a little cheese to go with the beer but I guess if I want enough beer I will half to take a long some of my own to.

Well they told us it was going to be a card party so I and Grace thot of corse they would play cinch or rummy or may be whist but when we got over there they sprung this here game they call auction bridge whist. Mrs. Curtis says if I played whist I wouldent have no trubble lerning this here game but in this game you bid back & 4th. like pitch only you half to say what you are biding on & they got a lot of funny sines that means some thing & a mans got to go threw collige to lern all them sines so I just set there & played when it was my turn & onct I had a hole fist full of spades & bid 3 spades but my pardner took it a way from me with 1 heart & that counts more then 3 spades & I left her have it & they wasent a heart in my hand & when I layed it down she balled me out like it was some crime Id pulled off & we got set & she balled me out some more & of corse I couldent say nothing back because she was a woman & I dident even know her name & all I says to her was If you had left me have it with 3 spades they wouldent have been nothing to it & she says you couldent of even made 3

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spades because you couldent make nothing only a mess of things so I says yes & you couldent make nothing only a monkey out of your self so the peopl we was playing with give her the laugh & she seen she was geting the worst of it so she shut up her mouth.

Well Charley I & Grace dident win no prize but the woman that give me the balling out dident win nothing nether so she wasent as smart is she thot she was but any way the gents prize was a box to put your collars in & if I had of win I would of throwed it a way as soon is we got out side the house because I aint got so many collars that they aint room for all of them in the drawer & of corse I dont never have them in the house all at onct nether because theys 3 or 4 of them gos to the landery evry wk. The womans prize was a pare of silk stockings & even if Grace had of win them she would half to take them down town & change them off because they was plane black & she aint in morning for no body. So the peopl that win the prizes was well come to them eh Charley.

Well the Carrys is giveing a party next wk. & we come home with them from the Curtis party & Mr. Carry ast me how did I in joy my self & I says O. K. only I could of got a way with a couple more bottles of beer with out standing on the pianno & singing a song & wouldent have no trubble keeping a wake if they played rummy or cinch or some game with a little life to it so I guess after what I said the Carrys will know enough to play some kind of cards at there

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party where you don't have to wave no diffrunt colered flags to tell your pardner what to bid & give us enough to drink & not serve there beer in no medisine dropper like they was afrade to give us a over dose & poisen a man.

Well Charley the rotten weather keeps up & I supose the merchunts is glad the cold weather keeps up because they all ways say they dont do no busness when it aint cold a round after xmas time so some bodys satusfide with the weather I mean the merchunts & I guess may be they get there coal at ½ price or may be there wifes is warm blood it & not kicking all the wile a bout how cold the house is.

Rgds. to Mary.

Fred A. Gross.

Allison, Ill. Jan. 16.

Brother Charley. Well Charley we dident have no more fun to Carrys party last night then over to Curtis the night they give there party & we played this here auction bridge at Carrys to & I set there & pretty near went to sleep & Carry dident give us no beer but instead of beer they give us some thing they called punch & they was suposed to be a punch in it but I could of swum in it with out no danger of geting a red nose & the stuff they give us to eat would of been a bout enough for 1 man all to gether but when it was splitted up for 16 peopl a canery would of starved to

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death trying to make a meal off of it & the Carrys runs a grosery store at that so they should ought to be able to get stuff to eat without paying no hold up price for it but may be they thot if they give us some thing to eat we wouldent buy no groserys off of them for a day or 2.

Grace come in a little wile a go looking mad so I says whats the matter & she says nothing & I says you cant fool me so she told me a bout passing by Mrs. Carpenter & Mrs. Hamilton & she spoke to them & they dident nether 1 of them speak to her. I guess I all ready told you who they was Charley. Mrs. Hamilton lives right next door to us & Mrs. Carpenter next to Hamiltons & there the peopl Grace called on last summer right after we moved out here & they dident never call on her back & Mr. Hamilton was 1 of the guys that wouldent leave us come in & dance that time we got the invatation by miss take & went down to the dance. So I says to Grace what did you speak to them for & she says she wanted to show she dident bare them no gruge because they was probly sore on them self for not calling on her & I says well you will know better next time & I pertend it like it was a joke but I would like to get a good chanct to get back at them peopl Charley & I guess you know Im the 1 that can do it when I get the chanct.

Kindest to Mary.

Fred A. Gross.

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Allison, Ill. Jan. 25.

Dear Charley. Well Charley I and Grace is going to get back at them swell head Hamiltons & Carpenters and when we get threw with them there chest wont be sticking out so far and it was Graces idear only she dident know how good it was when she sprung it and I guess when we put this over them Hamiltons & Carpenters will wisht they act it a little more frendily and hadent been so swelled on them self.

I will tell you how it come up and what wear going to pull off Charley & I bet youll laugh when you see what wear going to pull off on them. I layed off yest. and stayed home all day and wile we was eating our dinner Grace says some thing a bout giveing a party & I says we aint got no money to throw a way on no partys & she says well if I cant give a party I cant go to no more partys because I will be a shamed of my self going and I says Well I guess peopls been to our house as much is we been to there house & Grace says yes but they just come here uniformly & not no reglar invatation a fare and we havent gave no reglar card party with prizes and refreshmunts & I says I guess the peopl that have came here evnings have got more refreshments then we got to there house when they was giveing partys but she says Well I wont argue with you and if you wont give me no money to have a party we will just half to quit going to other peopls houses and she act it like she was go-

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ing to blubber so I says Well supose you give a party who would you ast to it and she says why the Carrys and the Curtisis thats had us to there house and then a few other couple that we met at them 2 partys so I says havent you forgot the Hamiltons & Carpenters & she says forgot them of corse I aint forgot them but do you think I would ast them to a party at my house after the way they been acting so then I seen the pt. & I says theys some sense to the way your talking now and we will have a party and not ast nether the Hamiltons or Carpenters & they will feel like a dirty doose. Well Grace couldent see it but I guess you can see it Charley and how would you & Mary feel if the peopl liveing next door to you give a swell party & you wasent ast. You would feel like a rummy wouldent you Charley. So I says to Grace Well I dont care what you think but I will come threw with the money for your party if youll promus to not ast nether the Hamiltons or the Carpenters & Grace says you can bet your life I wont so that part of it was fixed up. So then Grace says we will give a cinch party & give them a dutch lunch & we will ast the Carrys and the Curtis and the Bishops & Farrells & Grimes & counting our self that will make a even doz. & 3 tables of cards & I says thats all right a bout who you ast but leave me tend to the refreshmunts a speshaly the drinks & Grace says Thats all right with me because I dont care nothing a bout the drinks.

So we talked it all over & planed it all out & its go-

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ing to be some party Charley & when the Hamiltons & Carpenters hears a bout it they will want to go hide in a hole some wheres. Grace was going to go at it cheap but they wouldent be no good giveing no cheap party because if we dident give a good 1 them swell heads wouldent care whether they was ast or not. So when Grace seen I was willing to spend the money she says we should ought to have some invatations printed up & I says I would tend to that & we wrote out the invatations the way we wanted it fixed up and I left the order down town to day to have a doz. of them printed up & of corse we wont use the hole doz. because they wont only be 10 peopl ast besides our self & we dont want no invatation to our own party but we couldent get 10 print it no cheaper then 12 so we will keep the extra 2 for a suveneer or may be we will male them to you & Mary because of corse you cant come but may be you will like to take a look at the invatations but in case a couple of thems spoiled so as we cant send you none heres what there going to say on them.

F. A. Gross asst. Chief of Detectives Chicago Police dept. & lady will be please to entertain you Jan. 7 from 8 P. M. on. 3 tables proggresive cinch followed by refreshmunts. Gents prize 1 qt. whisky. Ladys prize hansome pare of corsets. Dress sutes.

You see Charley them prizes is worth playing for but bet. I & you it aint costing us nothing to give them because the whisky is part of what Gus Goetz sent out to the house for xmas and this is the 1st. time

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he ever give me a case but other yrs. he only give me a qt. but it dont hurt him none to loosun up onct in a while because Im in his place evry day 3 or 4 times & they dont never half to pick my pockets to get my money. And the corsets is what Mary sent to Grace 2 yrs. a go last xmas & Grace tride them on just onct & they wasent comftible but youd sware they was just out of the store. Grace made me stick in the part a bout dress sutes & I stuck it in because the peopl that comes to the party will half to past right by the Hamiltons & Carpenters house & supose they hapen to be going out that night & run in to the peopl comeing to our party they would see where the guests had on there dress sutes & that shows it aint no rummy party or no bunch of bums comeing & of corse I dont half to ware no dress sute my self because I wont half to go out because the partys right in my house.

Well Charley wear going to have frank forters & liver worst & slaw & potato sellid & ice cream & cake & coffee & of corse beer & you can bet I will give them enough so they wont go home dry & I will mix them up some high balls to & besides that the 1 that wins the prize will may be open it up before they go home & if he does I will fernish the excelsior water to make high balls out of that to. We will show them the time of there life Charley & I got it fixed up all ready with the man that runs the weakly paper out here to stick some thing in a bout the party so they wont be no chanct of the Hamiltons & Carpenters not finding

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out a bout it after words & I bet when they find out they will come over here on there hands and niece & make up for the way they treat it I & Grace.

I pretty near forgot to tell you a bout the peopl we got liveing next door to us not the Hamiltons but the peopl on the other side & they aint been liveing there long but moved in a little wile ago and there name is

Martin. Well the night this hapened I guess they was giveing a new yrs. eve party or some thing & they was makeing more noise then a brass band & hollering like a bunch of indians till 2 a clock in the A. M. & Grace had a headache & couldent sleep but she wasent going to say nothing but pretty soon little Ed was woken up by them hollering next door and he was balling & they couldent none of us sleep so pretty

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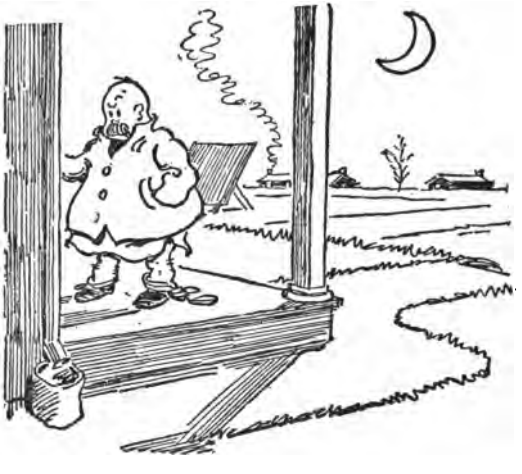
soon I couldent stand it no longer & I slipt my over cote & sox & shoes on over my night gown & went over & rapped at the door & Mr. Martin come to the door and I says you better lay off on some of the rackit & he says what will you do if we dont & then I flashed my star on him & I says cut the noise out or youll get the worst of it & then I come a way & I guess what I



said done the business because a bout a ½ hr. after words there guests went home & they wasent no more noise & next A. M. I and Mr. Martin went down on the same train to gather & I went up to him & says I was sorry to spoil his fun & he says Thats all right you dident spoil our fun you just add it to it. So you see he is a good fellow & we would ast him to the party only him and his wife would make 14 & I &

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Grace would half to set out of the game and not play if they was any more peopl ast & the peopl we ast we couldent leave none of them out & we cant ast 16 peopl & have 4 tables because we aint only got 3 tables in the house. I will write & let you know a bout our party & I bet you wisht you & Mary could be here for it.

Kindest to Mary. Fred A. Gross.

Allison, Ill. Feb. 1.

Brother Charley. Well Charley Im so sore I cant hardly write but I want to tell you what kind of bums we got liveing next door to us I mean the Hamiltons and the Carpenters that lives on the other side of the Hamiltons and before they get threw with me they will wisht they hadent of monkied with Fred Gross & I guess I dont half to tell you that they cant no body try there funny busness on me and get a way with it.

Well Charley I dident know they was peopl in the world like them bums & if Id of knew what kind of peopl we was buying a place next to them I would of lived in a tree before I would of came here to live but you know the old saying he that laughs the last gets the best of it. Im laying low & waiting for my chanct and when it comes I wont be taking no nap.

Well Charley I guess I better tell you what come off & the papers was all full of it this A. M. & I called up

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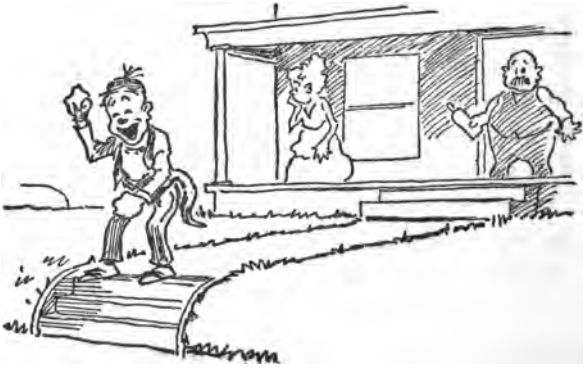
the chief & says I wouldent be down to day and he says all right & I aint sick or nothing but I know theys some bums down to head quarters that would shoot there mouth off a bout what was in the papers & I would probly get sore and shoot some body full of holes.

Well Charley last night was the night we give our party & of corse we knowed when we got the party up that the Hamiltons & Carpenters would get sore on acct. of not geting ast to the party but we dident in tend to leave them know nothing a bout the party a head of time but leave them read a bout it in the Allison paper when it comes out next Sat. But they found out a bout it some way & of corse they was sore but insted of takeing it like a man they act it like a baby or worse then that because they couldent no baby be mean enough to do what they done.

Well Charley the peopl all come that we ast & we



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set down & played cards a wile & evry body was haveing a pretty good time but I finely got dry & dident see no use of waiting till the card games was over before I give the boys some thing to moisun there throtes so I went out & mixed up a few high balls & I made them pretty stiff & the gents was tickled to death to get a hold of some thing to drink before it was time for the refreshmunts & Curtis says it taste it like more so I mixed them up some more & 1st. thing you know Curtis was throwing the cards all over the floor & he hadent only had 2 so Carry called me over to 1 side & says it wasent right to not finnish Curtis up when he had such a good start so of corse then the game busted up and Grace dident have the refreshmunts ready yet but my part of the refreshmunts was ready so I wasent going to leave the Co. with out nothing to do so I brot in the stuff & left the gents mix

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up there own & after while about 4 of them cleared the tables out of the way & begin danceing & of corse we dident have no music so Curtis pertend it like he was the orchuster & begin hollering & singing for the others to dance to & we was geting a long all O. K. but pretty noisey but no harm done till Curtis says our house wasent big enough to dance in it & 1st. thing you know him & Mrs. Carry went out on the walk & begin danceing there & him singing all the wile & hollering like a wild man & pretty soon the rest of them was all out doors & of corse I & Grace couldent stick in the house when they was all out side & we had to dance to keep warm because it couldent of been more then 10 or 11 above 0 & Grace kept after me all the wile to try & get Curtis to shut up his mouth but she might is well of told me to stop the europe war & he kept it up till finely he sliped & fell down on the ice & when I & Carry tride to pick him up we sliped to & fell down & I thot we wasent never going to get up it was so slipry & then Grace says we had woke the babys up & Curtis herd her & they wasent nothing to it but he must go up stares & put them back to sleep & he hit more of the stares with his jaw then he did with his ft. & him trying to get the babys back to sleep was a bout like as if I tride to do it by blowing the fire whistle in there ear & I & Grace had to go up & get him out of there room & wile we was up stares the door bell rung & I come down & every body was in the house again by this time

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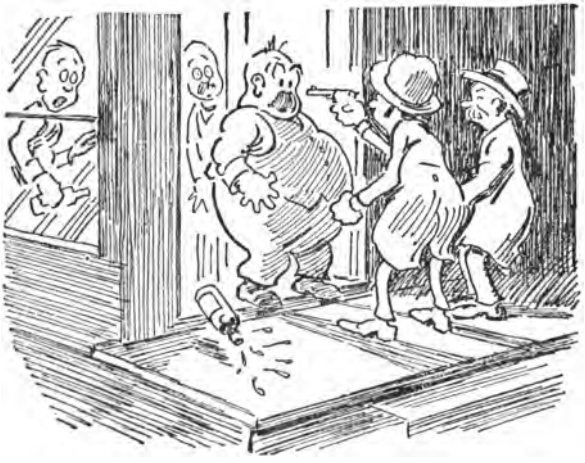
so I opened up the door & there was a bum there that says he was the night watchman & says who owns this house & I says I own it come in & have a drink & he says nothing doing & the best thing you can do is get your hat & cote on & come a long with me. I says what for & he says disturbing the piece & I says who says so & he says thats none of your busness



so I says you bet its my busness & you got to show me your warent & who sined it before I will go a long with you & that had him stoped & evry thing would of been O. K. only just then Curtis come down the stares & buted in bet. I and the oficer & told the oficer to beat it & the oficer told him to shut his mouth & then what does Curtis do but take a crack at the guy & the guy started to pull his club & then I horned in & took it

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a way from him & he says Well I dont need no warrent now but your arrested for resisting a oficer & I says whose going to arrest me & he says you will find out so then he went a way & I thot we was threw with him & we shut the door & Curtis was ready for a nap by this time so we layed him on the sofa & Grace brot in the stuff to eat & we was laughing and jokeing a bout the smart aleck constable when the door bell rung again & there was the same guy & 2 others with him & I hadent no sooner opened up the door then he pulled his gat on me.

Well Charley to make it short I had to go a long with them & they wouldent even leave me call up down town to head quarters & get Jack & some of the boys to come out and show them whose who & they wanted Curtis to but when they seen him layed out on the sofa they past him up & I was the goat & I couldent let on how sore I was because Grace & the rest of the women was haveing histeriks & evry thing else so I says good night to Grace & smiled at her & the rest of the women & told them not to worry & then I went a way with the 3 guys & they locked me up.

Well Charley I dident get no sleep because I was trying to figger out who put up the job but it come to me all of a sudden this A. M. that it was Hamilton

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& Carpenter & when I ast the oficer was it them he wouldent say nothing so you see it was them & I will make them swett for it.

Well Charley I was tooken up before the justice the 1st thing this A.M. & the justice was a good fellow & they wasent no body there to complane agin me only the oficer & when he found out who I realy was he wouldent say nothing & says he was sorry he pulled me in but it wasent his falt. So they left me go & I come home & Grace is pretty near sick because it was in the papers how we was giving a party & doing the foxey trot out in the middle of the st.

They wasent nothing in the papers a bout Curtis tho if it hadent of been for him they wouldent of never been no troubble & the next time I give a party I wont ast no sucker like him that wants to immitate the banda Roma the minut he gets 2 drinks under his belt only I wont give no more partys for no body & the next time any body says the word party to me I will bust a platter over there bean.

Of corse they aint no danger of the chief laying me off or doing nothing because I explained the hole thing to him over the phone this A.M. But you can bet Hamilton & Carpenter would of got my job if they could & it aint there falt they dident.

Well Ive wrote you a long letter Charley but I guess I had some news for

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you even if it was bad news but the next bad news will be a bout them stiffs that pulled it off.

Kindest to Mary.

Fred A. Gross.

Allison, Ill. Feb. 4.

Brother Charley. Well Charley you know the old saying a bout the 1 that laughs the last gets the best of it & the day after tomorrow I will be the 1 thats laughing & Hamilton & Carpenter will wisht they was in a hole some wheres hideing & they will find out they aint no body cant put nothing over on Fred Gross & get any thing but the worst of it. I got evry thing fixed up & I aint said nothing to Grace or no body else a bout it accept Bob Barnes & I guess you know who he is Charley or if you dont you should ought to. Hes the sherrif of Cook Co. Charley & they aint nothing I could ast him to do for me that he wouldent do on acct of what I done for him wile he was runing for sherrif.

Well Charley I will half to tell you whats comeing off & how I got the tip to pull off what Im going to pull off on them. The little irish girl that stays with the babys evnings some times was here Sun. & her & Grace was talking & the girl knows the girl that works for the Hamiltons next door to us & the Hamiltons higher girl told this little girl a bout Mrs. Hamilton bellonging to a auction bridge whist club

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that meets evry Thurs. P.M. & insted of playing for a regular prize like a pare of silk stockings or some thing they all stick in a $1.00 a peace & theys a bout 12 of them in the club & the 1 that wins the prize takes the $12.00 dollars in cash money & Mrs. Carpenters 1 of the club. Well Charley there going to meet the day after tomorrow to Hamiltons house & may be you guest all ready whats comeing off.

Well Charley I got the idear Sun. night after I was in bed & when I come down town yest. A.M. I went up in the county bldg & seen Bob & ast him would he do me a faver & he says any thing but lone me some money but he was jokeing Charley & he would lone me money to if I ast him but I says No I dident want to borry no money & then I told him what I wanted. Well Charley I guess you know whats coming off. When them swell society dames is haveing there little auction bridge whist game 1 of the deputy sherrifs is going to walk in on them & make a pinch see Charley. Of corse Bob couldent come out & make the pinch him self because it would put him in bad but hes going to give the job to a deputy name Parker thats no good & Bobs trying to get rid of him any way & if theys any trubble comes up Parker will be the bird elect it to face the music.

Well Charley I guess thats a poor idear & I guess that will make some story for the Chi papers & they wont be no chanct of them not hearing a bout it eh Charley. I will see to that.

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Well Charley I told you I would get back at these birds & make them wisht they had of layed off of me & before Im threw with them they will be cralling on there hands & niece but I guess you under stand Charley that I aint trying to do no more then just scare them & of corse the women wont be pulled in or nothing like that but just a pinch & a little story in the papers. Thats a plenty eh Charley.

Dont say nothing to Mary a bout it Charley because she might spill some thing a bout it to Grace in a letter & I aint sure yet that Im going to tell Grace.

Fred A. Gross.

Allison, Ill. Feb. 7.

Brother Charley. Well Charley the deeds done & its all over & they was a story in the papers this A.M. that would knock you dead & Im going to buy up some extra coppys of the papers & send you some of them & you will see if I fixed them swell heads or not only it came near being a bad mix up on acct. of this bone head deputy Parker that Bob sent out to make the pinch. He pored a few glassis of currage down his throte before he went on the job & when he got ready to work he was all lit up like a church & went up & pound it on Hamiltons front door & when the higher girl opened up the door he pulled his gun and she shreeked & pretty near fainted

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& then Mrs. Hamilton come runing to the door & she must be a pretty game bird Charley because she looked the gat right in the face & ast Parker what he wanted & he showed her his star & says the place was pinched & she says what for & he told her for being a gambleing house & she ast him was it a joke or some thing & he says no & she ast to see his warent & he says he dident need no warent because he come under orders from the sherrif & then she told him to come & set down & he come in jugling the gun a round in his hand & 3 or 4 more of the women pretty near fell dead & it would of been just like him to take a shot at them but Mrs. Hamilton finely got the other women cammed down & told Parker to have a seat & then she called her husband up in town & he called the sherrifs ofice & got a hold of Bob on the wire & of corse Bob told him it must be some miss take so Hamilton got Bob to call up & talk to Parker & Bob told Parker to leave the women a lone & come back to head quarters & Parker dident know what to think but he beat it out of Hamiltons house & back to town & thats all they was to it. But of corse some body called up the diffrunt papers & give them the story a bout a deputy sherrif radeing a swell gambleing joint in Allison & I bet the Hamiltons & Carpenters would of gave there right eye to not have that stuff in the papers.

Well Charley dont say nothing to Mary because I aint going to tell Grace & I havent told no body

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only you & Bob Barnes of corse & no body else accept this here Martin that moved in next door to us on the left & may be I told you a bout him makeing so much noise new yrs. eve that I had to go over & tell them to shut up but he was all right a bout it & dident get sore but I & him was seting next to each other going in to town on the train this A.M. & he seen me reading the peace in the papers a bout

the pinch at Hamiltons & I guess he seen me laughing & he ast me what the laugh was a bout & so I ast him if he could keep a secrit & he says sure so I told him all a bout it & when I got threw teling him he layed back in his seat & pretty near busted laughing & I says to him You know the old saying a bout the 1 that laughs the last gets the best of it & he says Thats me & he was laughing so loud that he drownded out the train.

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Well Charley I bet it wont be long before I will be writeing to tell you a bout them swell heads comeing over, to call on Grace & they will know better after this then to put on heirs in front of peopl thats just as good is them and a hole lot better.

Kindest to Mary.

Fred A. Gross.

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CHAPTER IV

UNCIVIL WAR

Allison, Ill. Feb. 3.

Brother Charley. Well Charley this is a funny World where a man has neighbors on 1 side of you that you couldent fine no better peopl no wheres and on the other side peopl that they aint nothing to mean and small for them to do and allways trying to make you missable.

A man name Martin and his wife is the peopl that we got liveing the next door on the left and I and Martins been going down town on the same train to gather and thats the way how we got aquanted so the other night I and him happen to get on the same train comeing home and set in the same seat and I ast him why dident him and his Mrs. come over some night and play cards and he says he dident need nothing to put him to sleep and I guess he ment I would probily fill him up with beer but beffore we got home he promused to bring the Mrs. and come over and last night was the night they come. Well

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Charley you ought to see this here Mrs. Martin. She aint nothing but a girl you might say and prety as a pitcher and dresses as good is a course girl and you could set down and read the evening paper with out no electrick light if she was in the rm. with her dimonds.

She took quiet a shine to Grace right a way and ast her did she sew her own close or where did she get them and Grace says no in deed she hadent had no time to sew her own close sence 3 yrs. a go when little Ed was born and Mrs. Martin says she thot may be the close was made beffore that and the reason she thot Grace must of made them was on acct. of she never seen nothing like them in the stores wile she was shopping. So of corse Grace was tickeled to deth like all the wommen when you swell them up a bout there close and her and Mrs. Martin got a long fine but Mrs. Martin dont play cinch so we set down and played rummy and Martin insist it we should play for $.01 a pt. to make it intrusting so we played a wile and I loose $1.50 and Grace loose $.80 but it was worth the money the fun we had.

So after we was threw plain cards and we was seting a round drinking a bottle of beer and all of a sudden they was a crash on the back porch and I and Martin run out there and a cat had knocked the garbidge pale over and I called Grace to see whos cat it was and she says it was Hamiltons cat the peopl that lives the next door to us on the other side then the

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Martins lives on. And Grace says the same cat had been doing it right a long because all most evry A. M. she found the pale laying on the porch so I says why dont they feed the cat at home and she wouldn't half to go prolling a round the neighbors hood to get some thing to eat and then Martin says may be the Hamiltons was sore at us and starved there cat on the purpose so as she would come over and undisterb us evry night and he ast me if Id gave Hamilton any reason to get sore at me that would make him pull off a trick like that.

So I says well may be Hamilton was sore at me but he dident have no more reason to be sore at me then me to be sore at him because it was a horse a peace so Martin ast me to tell him a bout it so I told him that we had gave a party 1 night and hadent ast the Hamiltons on acct. of them not calling on Grace after she had payed them a call when we 1st movved out here so Hamilton and his wife got sore on acct. of us not asking them to our party and 1 of the boys that come to the party got to many drinks under his belt and done the foxy trot out on the side walk and Hamilton sent for the night watch man and had me arested for disterbing the piece and so a little wile latter to get back at him I fixed it up with the sherrifs ofice to send 1 of the deputys out to Hamiltons house 1 P. M. when Mrs. Hamilton was giveing a party and plain action bridge whist for money and the deputy told Mrs. Hamilton she was arested for

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runing a gambleing house and of corse nothing come out of it accept that they was a peace in the papers a bout it and I onily done it to get even.

So Martin says probily Hamilton suspect it me of bean the 1 that sent the deputy out there and was trying to make things missable for me by starveing there cat so she would yowel a round our house all night and Martin says if he was me he would lern Hamilton a lesson and I says how and he says for me to think up some trick to play on him so as he would

quitt monking with me. So Im going to try and think up some thing and I would shoot his cat onily it aint the cats falt that there starveing her to deth and a cats got to eat the same as a human bean.

Well Charley I wisht you and Mary could get a look at Mrs. Martin when shes dolled up for the evening and she pretter then Edna Tangay or any of

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them stage beatys and last night she had on a dress that you kept thinking may be it would fall off because you couldent see what was keeping it on but it must of been attacked on some wheres with stables or some thing and her arms and neck and soldiers was bear and all spred over with this here tacklum powder and evry time she come clost to you you thot you was in a Green house or to a funeral or some wheres. Martin was all dood it up to and they was a swell looking pare but a man would half to spend a bout a wk. in a barber shop beffore he would look good enough to run a round with her.

Well Charley I wisht it would warm up a little and Im burning pretty near a ton of cole a wk. and still Grace comeplanes a bout how cold the house is but I guess she would comeplane of the cold if we was liveing down to the South Pole and if the house was relay cold last night like Grace says why dident Mrs. Martin make some remark a bout it because if any body was cold she ought to been with out no more than a batheing sute on you might say.

Rgds. to Mary and take care of your self.

Your Bro.

Fred A. Gross.

Allison, Ill. Feb. 12.

Brother Charley. Well Charley I guess this here Hamilton will keep his cat to home and mine his

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own busness beffore I and him is threw with each other. I found out today from Grace that Mrs. Hamilton is going to give a party the day after tomorrow night the 14 and the way I found out a bout it was the little irish girl that comes and sets in the house with the babys wile wear out nights found it out from Hamiltons higher girl and thats how I come to find out a bout it.

Grace was telling me a bout it at breakfast this A. M. and wile she was telling me a bout it a idear come to me because she says it was going to be a valentine party because the 14 is valentine day so I thot all of a sudden a bout sending this here Hamilton a valentine not 1 of these pretty ones that folds up with the flowers on them but a comical 1 only it would be so comical it would make him sore and he wouldent get no laugh out of it. So I set down besides Martin on the train going down town and I told him a bout me going to send Hamilton a valentine and he says it was a grate idear only you should ought to go stronger then that and pull off some thing else on him a long with it and I says what could I pull and he brot up a bout the party the Hamiltons is going to have and ast me couldent I get a hold of 1 of these sines the helth bord hangs up on a house when the residence has got some decease and got to be quarnteed and he says if I could get a hold of 1 of them sines and hang it under the electrick light on Hamiltons porch the night of the party the guests would

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all of them see it and be scared to go in the house and turn around and go home and Hamilton and his wife would set there all evening wondring why dident there friends come to the party.

Well Charley I seen right a way that was better then sending him a valentine but Im going to send him a valentine to and I got 1 down town today and going to male it to him tomorrow and its some valentine Charley a pitcher of a big hog drawed on it and then theys some pottery under the pitcher that says.

They ought to keep you in a pen
Not let you be with other men
Your not a man but just a big
Dissgusting stupid greasy pig

I guess that will give him some thing to think a bout hey Charley but I was going to tell you a bout the sine I got a hold of and it says SMALL POX in big letters on it and Im going to sneek over there the night of the party as soon is it gets dark and hang it up right under where they allways got the electrick light on the porch and the guests cant help from seen it when they get ready to ring the door bell and then they will see the sine and beat it home and Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton can have there party all to them self and may be some peopl might think it was a dirty trick but it aint ½ as bad is starveing your cat so as she will come over evry night and knock

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over a mans garbidge pale over. And yowel a round the house.

Well Charley I will write and let you know all a bout the Hamiltons big valentine party hey Charley.

Your Bro.

F. A. Gross.

Allison, Ill. Feb. 15.

Dear Charley. Well Charley Grace has went to bed and says she wouldent set up no longer with me because I was to mean and cross and I guess I got a right to feel sore but she dont know nothing a bout it because I dident tell her nothing a bout it.

Well Charley I told you a bout me sending Hamilton that valentine and I just ment it in fun and what do you think he done Charley but he must of did it beffore he ever got my valentine because I sent it to him Wed. A. M. and when I stoped in at the P. O. Wed. on the way to the train to go in to town they was a letter there for me only it wasent no letter but a valentine 1 of the dirtest you ever seen Charley a pitcher of a man that was suposed to be a detective only they was a bandige over his eyes so as he couldent see nothing and he was holding out his hand and a stick up guy or some thing was puting a role of bills in his hand and under the neath they was a pome sane all detectives was cheap grafters. Well Charley it made me so sore I couldent hardily talk and when

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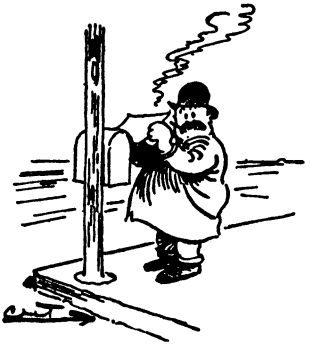

I got on the train Martin seen they was some thing wrong so he ast me what was the matter so I showed him the valentine and he says he dident blame me for getting sore and who ever sent it was a dirty trick and if he was me he wouldent never rest till he found out who sent it and then he would get even with them. Well the address on the envellop was wrote with a tipe writer so I couldent tell whose hand writeing it was so I says to Martin how was I going to find out who sent it and he says I thot you was a detective and I says I am a detective but I dont know no body mean enough to pull off a stunt like that and he says I bet it was your friend Hamilton and as soon is he menshoned Hamiltons name of corse I knowed it must of been him.

Well Charley what do you think of a man that will pull off a dirty trick like that and he aint man enough to come out and say some thing to my face and I told Martin I says I would go to Hamiltons house on my way home that night and call him out on the porch and bust his jaw for him and Martin says if I done that it would get into all the papers and I would get in bad and besides that would spoil my idear a bout hanging the small pox sine on Hamil-

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tons door because if I took a punch at Hamilton he would probily half to call in the Dr. and go to bed and they wouldent be no party. So I decide it to try and hold on to my temper and that night when I seen the Hamiltons was eating there supper I snuck over on there porch and hung the sine up and then I came home and ett supper and set where I could look over on there porch and what do you think Charley he was

to cheap to light up the electrick light on the front porch and it was as dark is a pitch but he dident never light the light all evening but just left the porch dark and of corse the peopl that come to the party couldent see no sine or nothing else on the porch so they went in the house like they was nothing wrong and I could hear them singing and enjoin them self till after midnight. What do you think of a guy Charley thats so cheap he wont light up his

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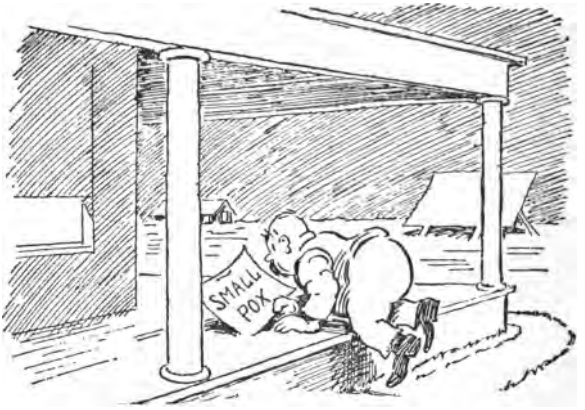
lights but just as soon leave his frends stumble in the dark and brake there neck.

Well Charley I finely went to bed when I seen they wasent nothing comeing off and as soon is I got up yest. A. M. I looked over there and some body had tooken the sine down all ready. Well I guess Grace must think Im sick or some thing the way I been acting yest. and today because Im still so sore yet that I cant hardily talk to no body and if it wasent



like picking on a baby I would go over to Hamiltons house right now and bust his big nose for him.

I dont half to tell you Charley that I dident never take a nickle that wasent comeing to me and the only thing I ever got from stick up men was abuse and thats because I been after them all my life and if it wasent for me theyd brake in to the mayors house wile he was eating his lunch and steal the cream off

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of his coffee but they aint been ½ the stick ups and burglerys sence I been over looking that end of it and now this swell head pup trys to call me a thief and a grafter but you can bet your last shirt that he will hear from me beffore Im threw with him the cheap bum.

Well Charley they should ought to be a law against sending these here valentines and it may be it might be all O. K. to send them pretty valentines with the flowers on them to the wommen but they should ought to bar these here comical ones and there a bout as comical is a hanging over to the county jail and it might be all right to send them for a joke but not try and inselt some body and call them a crook. Hes so crook it him self that you couldent pull corks with him hey Charley.

Your Bro.
Fred A. Gross.

Allison, Ill. March 1.

Bro. Charley. Well Charley I wisht you could of been a long with us last night you and Mary the both of you but I dont know if Mary would of liked to went a long or not because we was over to the Martins and when your in the same house with a lady that dresses like Mrs. Martin a womman must feel pretty slopy a long the side of them close Mrs. Martin wares and of corse I aint sane that Mary cant look

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good when she wants to but this here Mrs. Martin has got them all beat when it comes to close but at that shes all ways talking a bout she wisht she could get a hold of some close like Grace wares and only last night she was after Grace to leave her borry 1 of her dresses and ware it to a mask raid.

Well Charley Martin give us some cock tales that he made them up him self and if a man drunk 3 of them you would start down the dranege cannel in a finger bold but he give us 2 of them and a few bottles of beer and beffore the evening was over Mrs. Martin was lerning Grace the ballad dance and you ought to see Mrs. Martin dance Charley and its better than any thing I ever seen down to the columbia but if Grace had to make a liveing ballad danceing she would starv her self to deth for lack of nothing to eat and they wasent nothing in Martins house that she dident run in to it and I bet if the chairs and tables could talk they would of hollered murder.

Well we dident play no cards but we fooled a round and done this in that and they turned on the phonegraf and I and Mrs. Martin danced to gather and I thot I had a arm full of flowers and then we set down and talked and Martin ast me hadent I did nothing to Hamilton for sending me that valentine and I says no I hadent because I and Grace had talked it over to gather and Id told her all a bout it and I and her had made it up in our mind to not do nothing more a bout it but just leave the Hamiltons

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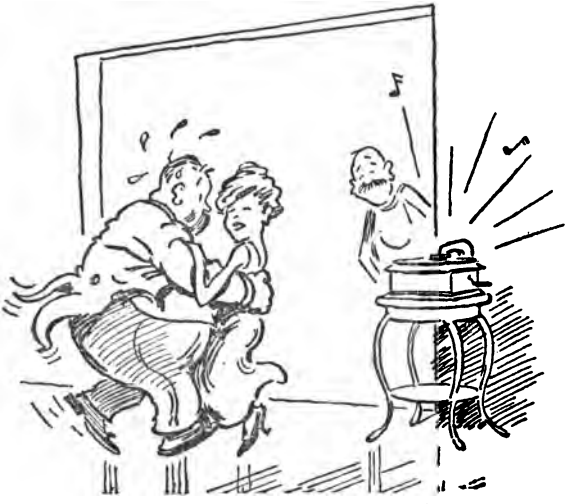
a lone and act like they wasent no such peopl and then Mr. and Mrs. Martin both says they thot we was suckers to leave Hamilton get off so easy when hed inselted I and Grace so I says well I cant think of nothing to do only go over there and bust him in the jaw and Martin says well may be he could think up some thing him self and if he could think up a



good 1 he would tell me because he was my frend and dont like to see a man get the worst of it and thats the kind of a friend to have hey Charley. Martins entirely diffrent from a big stiff which is to cheap to light up the lights in his house when hes giveing a party.

Well Charley I wisht you and Mary could see the

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Martins and I bet they aint no body liveing near you thats as good Co. as them and I and Grace is pretty lucky to have them liveing the next door to us only we dont no more then brake even on neighbors with the Hamiltons on the other side.

Best rgds. to Mary.

Your Bro.
Fred A. Gross.

Allison, Ill. March 9.

Dear Charley. Well Charley I put 1 over on Hamilton and of corse he wont never know who done it but still in all it made him good and sore and this time I seen him when he found out a bout it and I was laughing at him only he couldent see me because I was where he couldent see me.

Well Charley I will tell you what I done and it was Martins idear and I will give him creddit for it. Hamiltons got a automobile and they been running it all winter because they got 1 of these here tops on it thats just like a room you might say air tight and glass insted of just curtins so they can run it in the winter with out geting cold and then in the summer they take the top part off of it and have a reglar automobile. Well theys lots of evenings when Hamilton leaves the automobile out side there house on the st. in front of the house wile there in side the house enjoin them self in the evening so Martin says

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why dident I go after Hamiltons automobile and I ast him what did he mean and he says take a knife over there some night when the automobile was standing out the side by the curb and cut the tires and if I cut the tires the air would all come out of them and Hamilton would half to put on some new tires so I says no I wouldent do that because that would be destroying a mans property and I wouldent mix up in nothing like that and take a chanct of geting in bad down town so then Martin says Well if you dont want to cut the tires theys still an other way yet that you can let the air out of them and thats unscrew the valves thats on the tires and the wind would come out but they wouldent be no property destroyed because the air be longs to me just as much is Hamilton only it would make him awfull sore if he was in a hurry to go some wheres.

So the night beffore last I pulled it off Charley and I had quiet a time doing it because theys some fancy kind of valve on the tires thats hard to get off and leave the air come out but I finely done it while Hamilton and his wife and who ever was there vissiting them was in the house and I was scarred all the wile some body would see me on acct. of the automobile bean lit up but no body seen me and when Id pulled it off I snuck back over to my house and watched out the window for Hamilton and his friends to come out and finely they come and I wisht you could of herd him Charley when he found out what had came off and he

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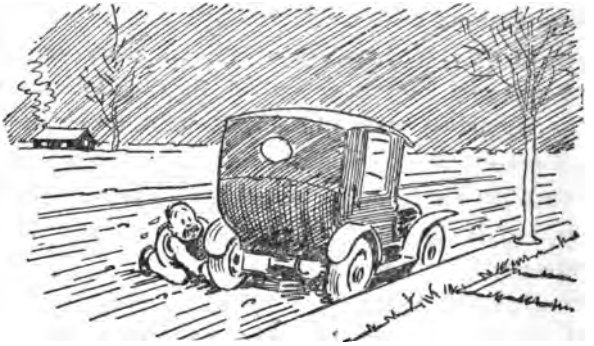
swore right in front of his wife and a lady that was with them and says it must be some of the kids in the neighbors hood that done it because they wouldent no groan up man pull some thing like that and thats where Mr. Hamilton got fooled hey Charley because if I aint groan up yet I guess I will be a gient when I get my groth hey Charley.

Well it took them over ½ a hour to get there tires



blowed up again and they sent the wommen folks in the house wile they done the work and its a good thing the wommen wasent where they could hear Hamilton talking all the wile or theyd of thot he was trying to see how many wds. could he make up and I will half to slip it to him Charley he can cuss as good is the chief when the news papers gets after the dept.

I guess that will hold Mr. Hamilton a wile Charley and I bet he would of cust some more if he could of saw me seting behind the window lissining to him

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and I had the window part of the way open and pretty near froze to deth but it was worth freezeing to deth to lissen to the cheap stiff rave. Well Charley him and Mrs. Hamilton and there friends may be high socitey and so 4th but that dont stop the air from runing out of there tires onct in a wile hey Charley.

Well I guess I aint told you a bout I and Grace is

going to give a party and I thot we was all threw with partys for a wile but Grace says that Mrs. Martin told her we ought to give a hole lot of partys on acct. of us bean new peopl in town and if we wanted to stand in good we should ought to enter tane a good eel so wear going to give a party next Fri. night only it wont be none of these here stew partys or no ruff stuff but evry thing the best and up to the date and Mrs. Martin has gave Grace a lot of tips a bout how

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should a party be ran and I guess the peopl will think wear as good is the Hamiltons or any of them swell heads before wear threw but of corse we aint going to ast the Hamiltons because I wouldent have them in the house.

This here partys going to cost us some money but its like Mrs. Martin told Grace if you want to live right you got to pay for it and they cant no cheap skates get by with the right peopl in a place like this here. Grace is going to serve them with sand witchs and ice cream and coffee and cake only not no cheap home made ice cream but get it from the drug store and they will be 16 of us all to gather the Martins and the Curtis and Carrys and some other nice peopl we met a round here and you might say its the cream of Allison socitey and of corse we got to play auction bridge whist on acct. of that bean the swell game a round here tho it aint near the game like cinch is.

Well Charley I wisht you and Mary could be here for the party even if it would leave 1 couple out of the card game because with you here they would be 18 of us includeing I and Grace but any way take care of your self and regards to Mary.

Your Brother,

F. A. Gross.

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Allison, Ill. March 14

Brother Charley. Well Charley I guess I would be better off if I was a cheap skate like some peopl and if I was a cheap skate they wouldent of never nothing came off like last night. Well Charley I been so sore sense it come off that I was a bout to pull my gun on some body with out naming no names but a man can be drove so far Charley and not no father and if it wasent for what would happen to Grace I would shoot this here Hamilton full of led and take my medison only I dont believe theys a jury in the world that would convict me when I told them what he pulled off.

Well Charley theys a big diffrunts between a joke and not a joke and if Hamilton thinks that what he done was funny I feel sorry for him but he dident do it because he thot it was funny Charley but because he dont know how to do nothing but play mean rotten tricks like sending me that valentine.

Grace wont never give no more partys Charley and I dont never want to here the word party so dont never tell me a bout no party Charley.

Well Charley we was seting in the parlor I and Grace and waiting for Mr. and Mrs. Martin and the rest of our guests to come and it was geting kind a late and Grace kept sane a bout how late it was geting and all of a sudden the telephone rung and I went and ansered the bell and ast who was it and it was Mrs. Martin and she says to excuse her for calling up but

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she couldent wait no longer to find out weather she couldent do some thing for us and find out who was it and I ast her what she ment who was it and she says she ment who was it the krape was hanging on the front door for and I says they wasent no krape on the front door and she says Id better go and look and I went out there and sure enough they was krape on the door like they was some body dead. Charley come to find out the Curtis and the Carrys and 2 or 3 other peopl was comeing to the party to gather and just beffore they start it to ring the door bell they noticed this here krape on the door and a couple of the wommen pretty near fainted a way and finely Curtis says lets ring the bell and find out whats happened but Carry says no he dident feel like comeing in to a house where they was krape on the door when he was all drest up gay for a party so finely they decide it to go over and ast the Martins if they knowed any thing a bout it on acct. of them liveing next door.

Mrs. Martin screamed when they told her a bout it and when her and Martin and the rest of them come back and seen the krape again and Mrs. Martin was pretty near haveing histericks so Martin took her home and Martin says to the other peopl that it looked like some thing awfull had happened and says evry body had better go home and after a wile when Mrs. Martin got back her nerve she would ring us up and find out what could of happened and then she would call the rest of them up and tell them a bout it. Well it wasent

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till pretty near 10 a clock that she got her nerve up and called up on the phone and then of corse we explained that it was 1 of Hamiltons dirty tricks and Grace wanted Mrs. Martin to come over and have the party and Grace would call up the rest of the peopl and tell them a bout it and we could have the party any way and better have it late then never but Mrs. Martin says her party close was all off and hung up

and it would be 2 hrs. beffore she could get drest again so she was sorry that it had happened but they wasent nothing she could do accept tell me that if she was me and any body had put some thing like that over on her she would of shot them full of holes so Grace called up the Curtis and the Carrys and told them about the miss take but some of them was like Mrs. Martin with there party close off of them and hung up all ready and they all says they was so worried a bout seen the

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krape that they couldent come now even if they was drest and they says theyd been seting up to hear from Mrs. Martin a bout what had happened and they wouldent of never been able to sleep if some thing had of relay happened but now they was so releived that they thot they would try and go to sleep and forget it and so 4th.

Well Charley that was all right and nice of them to feel so sorry for us but what a bout the refreshmunts and the 3 qts. of ice cream from the drug store and it was there best stuff 40 cts. a qt. and how a bout the 2 new decks of cards we had boughten for the party and how a bout I and Grace going to all that trubble and dressing up swell and so 4th. Well Charley Mrs. Martin says we should ought to posepone the party and have it some other night but Grace says she was threw with partys and I says the next 1 that says some thing to me a bout a party would get a crack in the jaw.

Thats what a man gets for not bean no cheap skate Charley and if I had of been a cheap skate and left the light off on the front porch like Hamilton done the cheap stiff the 1st. peopl that got there wouldent of saw the krape and would of rang the door bell and then ether I or Grace would of went to the door and they wouldent of been no trubble.

Well Charley Im trying my best to hold on to my temper so as I wont go over to Hamiltons house and shoot him up but as Grace says it probly wasent Mrs.

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Hamiltons falt but just Hamilton him self and I wouldent have no right to make a widow out of her just because her husband aint no good and a speshuly when I dont know weather hes going to leave his wife enough to live on.

But I guess you know me well enough to know that he aint going to get by with out no come back and I will pull off some thing on him that will make him wisht he had treated I and Grace with respect and I feel like going right over to there house and hanging the krape on there own door and see how they like it only Grace says whats the use of giveing them back there krape because I and her cant live for ever and it dont do no harm keeping some a round the house.

Well Charley wait till I get back at him and regards to Mary.

Your Bro. F. A. Gross.

Allison, Ill. March 18.

Dear Brother Charley. Well Charley I got Hamilton on the run now and beffore Im threw with him he will be hollering for help. Martin give me the idear and its the best yet and its a grate thing to have Martin on my side and helping me a long and it looks like now Hamilton would come over pretty soon and ast me to let up on him because I been pulling this for over 2 days and he aint going to stand for it much longer with out hollering for help.

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Well Charley Martin told me a bout the idear and heres what I been doing I been calling up Hamiltons house on the phone all hrs. of the day and night and when I get him on the phone I change my voice like and talk in a diffrunt voice and ast him who is he and when he says who he is I ast him some question like why dont you come and hall a way the garbidge or why dont you come and do this in that like he was the garbidge man or the plummer or some body. I had to fix it up with the girl down to the tellephone office and I told her to not let Hamilton know who was calling him up and tell him she for got who was it and she says at 1st she wouldent do it but finely she says she would do it for a couple of days because I told her I and Hamilton is the best kind of frends and I was just playing a little joke on him but it aint no joke with me Charley and if I and him is friends so is 2 bull dogs only he aint no bull dog but a hound that cant do nothing but wine. I can see out of the window when he sets down to breakfast and then I call him up and as soon is Ive said what I got to say I start for the train so he sees me coming down the st. and dont never suspect that its me calling him up and then when I get home again I call him up at supper time and 2 or 3 times in the evening and onct after I think hes went to bed at night. Well Charley I bet Ive got him crazy by this time and hes a bout ready to quit because the last 2 times I called him up he wouldent come to the phone but his higher girl says he wasent in and she says if

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who ever it was kept on calling him he was going to have them arrested. Fine chance hey Charley. But it aint no good idear only for a little wile because now he wont come to the phone and the tellephone girl says its went on long enough and she scarred she will get fired so it looks like Id half to cut it out but I guess hes reddy to holler enough and call evry thing quits but hes got it comeing to him Charley. Give the devvil his do as they say and best regards to Mary.

Your Brother, Fred. A. Gross.

Allison, Ill., March 20.

Dear Brother Charley. Well Charley this will be a supprise to you after what I been telling you right a long and it was a supprise to me onily I kind a suspect it all the wile that this here Martin was wrong. He dident never act right some way so finding out a bout him dident supprise me like it would of if I hadent of suspect it him all the wile.

Well Charley it wasent Hamilton that was pulling all the dirty work like sending me that valentine and hanging krape on my door and so 4th. but it was Martin all the time and I and Hamilton is good friends now and he says he dident never mean no harm to me and says both him and Mrs. Hamilton and there higher girl thot the cat was geting enough to eat. And he says he wouldent never think of mixxing up in no brall with his neighbors so I and him feels the same

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way to gather a bout it and they wont be no more trubble between us.

Well Charley you wont hardily beleive that a man could live as mean and nasty is this here Martin trying to make trubble between neighbors and I will tell you the reason why he done it Charley and you will see what kind of a bum he is and no wonder I never relay liked him. In the 1st. place he was sore at Hamiltons because Mrs. Hamilton hadent payed no call on Mrs. Martin and Hamilton says that him and his wife seen right a way that Martin wasent no good and thats why Mrs. Hamilton dident call on Mrs. Martin because she dident want to get mixxed up with them and the Hamiltons is high socitey here so Martin got sore because him and his wife couldent horn in to the 4 hundred club. So he used me for a Tool you might say and kept edgeing me on by sane it was Hamilton that was doing all them things to me and all the wile he was doing them him self so I would think it was Hamilton and keep pestering him like I done. Grace says at 1st. that may be Martin was onily doing it for a joke but Hamiltons higher girl and Martins higher girl is pals and Martins higher girl told Hamiltons higher girl that Martin was sore at Hamiltons and thats why he done it. Well Charley between I and you they was an other reason that Grace or Hamilton dont know nothing about it and I will tell you a bout it onily dont say nothing even to Mary. This here Martin was sore at me Charley on acct. of the way

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his wife looked at me and thot may be I was trying to steal his wife and you know Charley that I aint in that kind of busness but I cant help it if a womman looks at me onct in a wile and I noticed Mrs. Martin myself so of corse her husband could see it to and they couldent no body help from not noticeing it unlest they was blind. But what could I do a bout it nothing.

Well Charley it all come out last night and we had some big time and I dont never want an other time like it only Im glad that I and Hamilton under stands each other and Hamilton says he will see that the town pays for what ever dammige was did a round my house. Martin was to yellow to stay home wile he was pulling off his little trick and neither him or his wifes been home sence yest. beffore supper and the house is shut up but he needent be scarred Im going to do nothing to him not now any way because Hamilton says for me to lay lowe and pertend like I dident know the truth and if Martin tries some thing more Hamilton will go in with me and we will run him out of town and an other reason is acct. of Im sorry for Mrs. Martin and to bad shes got to be tide up to a man like he and you couldent hardily blame her for looking at an other man onct in a wile.

Well Charley I aint got much time so I will hurry up and tell you what come off. I and Grace went to bed early last night and we wasent hardily no more then in bed when we heard the fire whistle blown and of a sudden we herd the fire enjine and hose cart out

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in front of the house and then the front door bell rung like they was trying to wake up the town and I thot may be the house was on fire so I run down in my night gown and opened up the door and pretty near got drownded. Well Charley the hose was turned right on me and me with out nothing on only my night gown and they give it to me full forse all over. Well I tride to holler at them to quit but a man cant holler very good with the hose turned in to your mouth and I guess it would of been all off with me only for Hamilton comeing.

He grabed the 2 guys that was holding the nozzle and busted 1 of them and told them if they dident shut off the water insolently he would have them all in jail and they seen who he was and shut it off. Well Charley the hole lore flr. of the house was under water pretty near and I was a reck. But I had sence enough left to send Grace up stares beffore I done any thing else. When she was out of the way Hamilton come in and brung the fire men a long with him and then he ast them what did it mean and at 1st. they says it must of been a falts allarm but he says dont try any monky busness with me and the best thing you can do is tell the truth and then he told them right out what he suspect it and they owned up to it and told us how Martin had got them to do it and they thot it was just a joke between frends or they wouldent of had nothing to do with it.

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Well Charley what do you think of that. Martin give them a peace of money and got a few drinks under there belt and then told them to pull this off and says it was just a joke and that I and him was frends. A fine frend hey Charley.

Well Hamilton give them a awfull balling and then

told them to beet it and if they ever done any thing like that again he would get them and hes 1 of the bord that runs the town so you can bet they payed a tension to what he says.

Then Hamilton come in and told me to go up stares and get some dry close on because he wanted to talk

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to me so I went up and finnished my bath with a towl and put on a pare of pants and a shirt and come down and I and Hamilton had a good long talk.

Well Hamilton says that him and his wife had knew a bout what Martin was puting over on me for sevrul days but they thot it wasent there busness to but in unlest they was some real dammige done and when Hamilton seen the fire dept. out in the front of my house he thot it was a bout time to enter fear and I thanked him and we talked it all over and had a drink to gather and shook hands and he went home

onily he told me beffore he went to not try and do nothing untill I could get Martin good and to wait for Martin to make the next move.

Well Charley it looks like I and Grace would be in right with the Hamiltons and the rest of the 4 hundred club and may be Martin will know enough to not try nothing more but if he does I and Hamilton will have him drove out of town onily a man cant help from feeling sorry for Mrs. Martin and I wont do nothing to injur her because a womman cant be blamed for looking at an other man onct in a wile.

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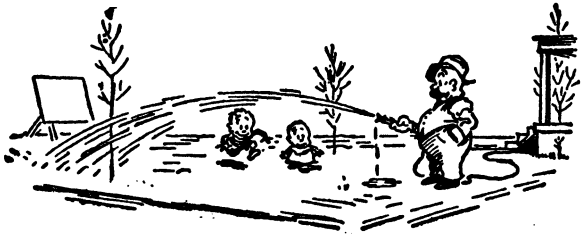
Well Charley when Martin comes back I guess he will be supprised to find I and Grace hobbling a round with the Hamiltons and the other high monky monks hey Charley.

Your Bro.
Fred A. Gross.



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